



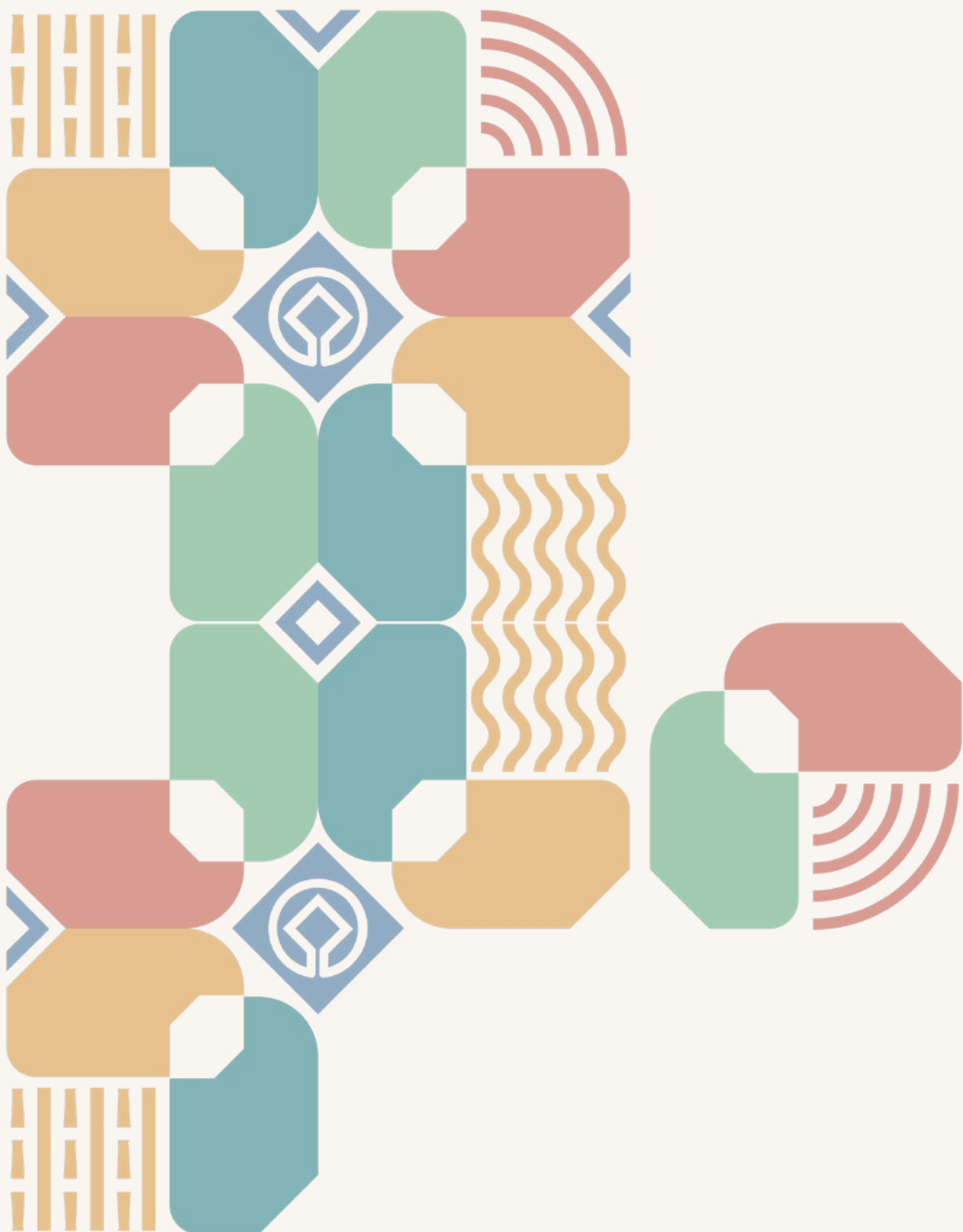
Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity

Rethinking Heritage Authenticity:
for the Future of World Heritage



With the contribution of:





HA NOI —
NINH BINH
VIET NAM

27 September
— 01 October
2026

Concept Note

Rethinking Heritage Authenticity: An Asia-Pacific Dialogue for the Future of World Heritage

Dates	27 September – 1 October 2026
Venue	Ha Noi and Ninh Binh, Viet Nam
Convened by	Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
In partnership with	UNESCO World Heritage Centre
Format	Two and a half conference days, complemented by arrival and registration arrangements, official and protocol events, and a technically structured field visit
Participants	Approximately 250, including international and regional experts, representatives of States Parties, the World Heritage Centre, UNESCO field offices, the Advisory Bodies, site managers, researchers, community representatives, knowledge holders and youth
Reference framework	World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines; Nara Document on Authenticity (1994); Nairobi Outcome Document on Heritage and Authenticity (2025); Hoi An Protocols; relevant World Heritage Committee decisions





01

Background

At its 46th session, the World Heritage Committee initiated renewed reflection on the concept of authenticity, acknowledging emerging challenges in the interpretation and conservation of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) across diverse cultural and geographical contexts. This reflection was further advanced through the establishment of an Open-Ended Working Group tasked with examining evolving understandings of authenticity and their implications for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

At its 47th session (2025), through Decision 47 COM 5C, the World Heritage Committee adopted the Nairobi Outcome Document on Heritage and Authenticity and requested that an agenda item on authenticity be placed before the General Assembly, recognizing the need for continued global dialogue on this foundational concept.

Within this evolving framework, Viet Nam presents a particularly relevant context for advancing global reflection on authenticity. As a State Party with a diverse range of cultural and natural World Heritage properties and long-standing engagement in conservation practice, Viet Nam offers an important Asian perspective on the relationship between continuity, living heritage, landscapes and contemporary development pressures.

Building on this foundation, the International Conference on Cultural Heritage in Africa: A Dialogue on the Concept of Authenticity, held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 6 to 9 May 2025, constituted a major milestone. The conference brought together over 400 participants from all UNESCO regions and resulted in the Nairobi Outcome Document, which reaffirmed authenticity as pluralistic, dynamic and context-specific, and called for further reflection on its application within the World Heritage system.

In response to the Committee's request, and building on these developments, the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, in partnership with UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, proposed to host the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity in Ha Noi and Ninh Binh in September 2026.

02

Purpose and Planning Assumptions

More than thirty years have passed since the adoption of the Nara Document on Authenticity in 1994. During this period, the World Heritage system has undergone substantial changes. Heritage is increasingly understood not only through the conservation of physical fabric, but also through continuing use, cultural practice, community custodianship, local knowledge, spiritual association, social memory and relationships between people and nature. At the same time, historical experiences, climate change, armed conflict, disasters, displacement, rapid urbanization, mass tourism, digital technologies and demands for greater community participation have created new conditions in which authenticity must be identified, evaluated and safeguarded.

Although the Nara Document established the fundamental principle that judgements of authenticity should be grounded in their respective cultural contexts, this principle has not yet been fully and consistently translated into World Heritage processes and practices. The 2025 Nairobi Outcome Document on Heritage and Authenticity provides renewed momentum to address this implementation gap by advancing a more pluralistic and community-centered understanding of authenticity — one that recognizes tangible and intangible attributes, continuity and change, and diverse cultural and knowledge systems.

Nevertheless, material evidence, original fabric and expert-led assessment often continue to carry greater institutional weight than living practices, periodically renewed structures, oral traditions, spiritual relationships and community-based systems of knowledge transmission. This imbalance can influence which forms of heritage are identified and documented, incorporated into national inventories and Tentative Lists, and ultimately considered for recognition under the World Heritage Convention.

The Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity will therefore provide a structured regional platform to critically examine whether existing approaches to heritage authenticity remain adequate for the conditions in which heritage exists today. It will not seek to replace the Nara Document or the Nairobi Outcome Document, or to establish a separate regional standard. Rather, it will build upon these documents and subsequent developments in heritage theory and practice from the Asian perspective, to identify how authenticity can be interpreted and applied more consistently, inclusively and credibly within the universal framework of the World Heritage Convention.

The initiative is a direct response to the current international reflection initiated by the 2025 Nairobi Outcome Document on Heritage and Authenticity. The World Heritage Committee, through Decisions 47 COM 5C and 47 COM 11 in 2025 and Decision 48 COM 6C in 2026, encouraged similar expert dialogues in other regions and called for stronger evidence, practical tools and consolidated recommendations that could inform future World Heritage methodology and possible revisions of the Operational Guidelines. The Asia-Pacific Dialogue is



designed not as another general discussion on authenticity, but as a regional contribution to this emerging global process.

Its central purpose is to examine Asia-Pacific cases systematically, including the practical case of the Thang Long Citadel in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, and to translate the findings into practical recommendations for heritage identification, Tentative Lists, Preliminary Assessments, nomination dossiers, evaluation, conservation, management, reconstruction and promotion, monitoring, training, and relevant national legal and policy frameworks. In doing so, the Dialogue will clarify how a broader but evidence-based understanding of authenticity can contribute to a more representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List, without weakening the requirements of Outstanding Universal Value, integrity, protection and effective management.

Planning assumptions

This plan sets out the minimum governance structure, intellectual workstreams, operational responsibilities and accelerated delivery schedule required to organize a two-and-a-half-day Asia-Pacific expert conference on heritage authenticity in the World Heritage system. The conference will be organized according to the following outlines:

- **Scale.** Approximately 300 participants, including international and regional experts, representatives of States Parties, the World Heritage Centre, UNESCO field offices, the Advisory Bodies, site managers, researchers, community representatives, knowledge holders, youth, social organizations and operational support staff.
- **Duration.** Two and a half conference days, supplemented by arrival and registration arrangements, official and protocol events, and technically structured field visits.
- **Delivery window.** Five weeks from formal approval to the opening of the conference. Given this compressed timeframe, the conference should build upon existing research, identified case studies and established institutional networks, rather than attempt to commission an entirely new body of research during the preparatory period.
- **Format.** A combination of policy plenaries, comparative case-study sessions, technical roundtables, facilitated working groups and field-based analysis. Each component should contribute directly to a defined set of technical and policy outputs.
- **Reference framework.** The conference will be grounded in the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines, the Nara Document on Authenticity, the Nairobi Outcome Document on Heritage and Authenticity, relevant World Heritage Committee decisions, the Hoi An Protocols as a regional technical reference, and recent international developments concerning community-centered custodianship and tangible and intangible attributes.

03

Conference Objectives

The conference will:

- Share Asia-Pacific experience on the meaning and assessment of authenticity across diverse cultural, natural and mixed World Heritage contexts.
- Identify practical challenges in applying authenticity concepts to conservation, reconstruction, living heritage, cultural landscapes, urban heritage and disaster recovery.
- Build consensus on recommendations for site managers, States Parties, Advisory Bodies and heritage professionals, drawing on the emphasis of the Nairobi Outcome Document on community-centered, community-driven custodianship and on the integration of tangible and intangible attributes.
- Strengthen regional professional networks and cooperation among World Heritage institutions, universities, communities, knowledge holders, youth, non-governmental organizations and technical agencies.
- Produce clear recommendations for applying authenticity in heritage identification, national inventories, Tentative Lists, nominations, evaluation, management, monitoring, training, and relevant legal and policy frameworks.
- Deliver an evidence-based Asia-Pacific contribution to the international reflection requested by the World Heritage Committee, supporting future methodological development and a more representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List.



Expected outputs:

- A concise set of Asia-Pacific technical recommendations on heritage authenticity;
- A comparative synthesis of selected subregional case studies;
- A follow-up action plan identifying responsible institutions, required actions and deadlines for transmitting and applying the conference results.

04

Proposed Themes for Conference Discussion

Theme 1: Authenticity in a Changing World

Examine how changes since the 1994 Nara Document - including climate change, disasters, armed conflict, displacement, urbanization, tourism, digital technology and evolving heritage practices - affect the ways in which authenticity is understood, assessed and safeguarded. The session will identify where current World Heritage approaches remain adequate and where further methodological guidance is required.

Theme 2: Reconstruction, Recovery and Continuity

Assess how reconstruction, periodic renewal, repair and adaptation can sustain or undermine heritage values following conflict, disaster, environmental change or development pressure. Attention will be given to documentary and oral evidence, traditional knowledge and skills, community consent, continuity of function, and the limits of acceptable reconstruction. The session will propose principles for distinguishing culturally meaningful renewal from conjectural or value-eroding reconstruction.

Theme 3: Living, Spiritual and Associative Heritage

Examine how authenticity is conveyed through ritual, belief, memory, language, use, traditional knowledge, social relationships and connections between people, place and nature, particularly where heritage significance is not primarily expressed through physical fabric. The session will develop practical approaches for identifying and documenting tangible and intangible attributes without freezing living heritage or separating practices from the places and communities that sustain them.

Theme 4: Communities, Knowledge Holders and Contested Values

Examine how local communities, practitioners, elders, women, youth and other knowledge holders participate in defining, transmitting and safeguarding heritage values. The discussion will also address differences between and between communities, competing claims, displacement, restricted or sacred knowledge, consent, and the relationship between community knowledge and scientific evidence. The session will recommend principles for meaningful participation and credible evidence in authenticity assessments.

Theme 5: From Regional Experience to World Heritage Practice

Test how the conference findings can be applied to heritage identification, national inventories, Tentative Lists, Preliminary Assessments, nomination dossiers, evaluation, management, monitoring, training, and national legal and policy frameworks. Selected Asia-Pacific cases will be used to develop an operational authenticity-assessment framework and recommendations contributing to a more representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List. The session will clearly distinguish authenticity from — while explaining its relationship with — Outstanding Universal Value, integrity, protection and management requirements.



Relevant Points from the 2025 Nairobi Outcome Document

The 2025 Nairobi Outcome Document on Heritage and Authenticity is directly relevant to the proposed Asia-Pacific Dialogue because it calls for a broader, more inclusive understanding of authenticity within the World Heritage Convention. Although developed through an African dialogue, its principles are useful for other regions with living heritage systems, community custodianship, spiritual associations, traditional knowledge, evolving cultural practices and complex relationships between tangible and intangible attributes.

- **Plural understanding of authenticity.** Authenticity should not be treated as a fixed or purely material test; it should be understood in relation to cultural context, knowledge systems, continuity, use, memory and meaning.
- **Community - centered custodianship.** Local communities, knowledge holders and bearers should be actively involved in defining, explaining and safeguarding the values that make a place authentic.
- **Tangible and intangible attributes.** Conservation practice should address physical fabric alongside practices, beliefs, oral traditions, skills, rituals, language, social values and associations.
- **Application across World Heritage processes.** The Nairobi Outcome Document points to the relevance of authenticity in nomination dossiers, evaluation, management, monitoring, training, and legal or policy frameworks.
- **Regional expert dialogue.** The World Heritage Committee has encouraged similar expert dialogues in other regions, making an Asia-Pacific conference timely and strategically aligned.
- **Operational follow-up.** The conference should therefore aim not only to discuss authenticity, but to produce practical recommendations, outcomes and training priorities, case-study guidance and inputs that could inform future regional and global reflection.



Agenda

Indicative Programme

The programme below is indicative and remains subject to confirmation by the Government of Viet Nam and UNESCO.



DAY 0

Sunday, 27 September 2026
Arrival and registration

TIME	SESSION
All day	Arrival and registration of delegates
14:00 – 17:00	Optional city tours City Tour Pick-up Point Hoa Binh Hotel Lobby (for registered participants only) 27 Ly Thuong Kiet Street, Hanoi The guided city tour will depart from Hoa Binh Hotel and include visits to Hanoi's Old Quarter and other historic landmarks. Participants are kindly requested to arrive at the pick-up point on time.

DAY 1

Monday, 28 September 2026
Authenticity in a Changing World

Expected result: Agreement on the principal conceptual and institutional question that the conference must address.

TIME	SESSION
08:00 – 09:00	Registration of remaining delegates
09:00 – 10:05	Official opening Opening remarks by the Ha Noi Party Committee Address by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam Remarks by the Chairperson of the 49th Session of the World Heritage Committee, H.E. Mr Mustafa Yurdakul Remarks by the Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Mr Lazare Eloundou Assomo
10:05 – 10:20	The Ha Noi Outcome Document Co-Chairs: Prof. George Okello Abungu and Ambassador Le Thi Hong Van
10:20 – 11:00	Keynote addresses 10:20 – 10:40 Mr Lazare Eloundou Assomo, Director, UNESCO World Heritage Centre 10:40 – 11:00 Reconstructing authenticity: how the Kinh Thiên Palace research advances the classification of authenticity for World Heritage practice — Mr Nguyen Thanh Quang, Director, Thang Long – Ha Noi Heritage Conservation Centre

TIME	SESSION
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee break
11:15 – 12:10	<p>Coordinator: Pham Thi Thanh Huong</p> <p>Framing plenary: From Nara to Nairobi</p> <p><i>Chair: Mr Lazare Eloundou Assomo</i></p> <p><i>Coordinator: Pham Thi Thanh Huong</i></p> <p>11:15 – 11:25 Heritage ecosystems: why do we need a new approach? — Prof. Toshiyuki Kono, Honorary President, ICOMOS</p> <p>11:25 – 11:35 Reappraising authenticity thirty years after the Nara Document — Dr Luisa De Marco, ICOMOS Advisor</p> <p>11:35 – 11:45 From Nara to Nairobi and the international reflection on authenticity — Prof. George Okello Abungu, Australian National University, Canberra</p> <p>11:45 – 12:10 Discussion</p>
12:10 – 13:10	Lunch
13:10 – 14:10	<p>Coordinator: Le Hoang Lien</p> <p>Plenary session · Theme 1: Authenticity in a changing world</p> <p><i>Chair: Prof. Toshiyuki Kono · Co-Chair: Assoc. Prof. Tran Tan Van · Rapporteur: Gwenaëlle Bourdin</i></p> <p><i>Coordinator: Le Hoang Lien</i></p> <p>13:10 – 13:20 Networks and linkages: revisiting authenticity in the Asian context — Dr Janhwi Sharma, India</p> <p>13:20 – 13:30 Pyu Ancient Cities and Bagan — Mr Than Zaw Oo, Myanmar</p> <p>13:30 – 13:40 Authenticity perceived differently across natural and cultural frameworks: the mixed landscape challenge at Trang An — Assoc. Prof. Tran Tan Van, Viet Nam</p> <p>13:40 – 13:50 Archaeology and authenticity in a changing world, the case of Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hanoi — Assoc. Prof. Tong Trung Tin, Viet Nam</p> <p>13:50 – 14:00 Authenticity in maritime trading towns: comparative lessons from Hội An and Japanese port heritage for World Heritage practice — Prof. Nguyen Van Kim, Viet Nam, Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Minh</p> <p>14:00 – 14:20 Facilitated discussion</p>
14:20 – 15:40	<p>Coordinator: Nasiphi Gwagwa</p> <p>Plenary session · Theme 3: Living, spiritual and associative heritage</p> <p><i>Chair: Dr Matthew Whincop · Co-chair: Prof. Nguyen Van Kim · Rapporteur: Prof. Inaba Nobuko</i></p> <p><i>Coordinator: Nasiphi Gwagwa</i></p> <p>14:20 – 14:30 Authenticity within an Indigenous Australian context — Dr Matthew Whincop, ICOMOS-ICAHM</p> <p>14:30 – 14:40 Form is emptiness, practice is authenticity: Trúc Lâm Buddhism and heritage values at Yên Tử, Vĩnh Nghiêm and Côn Sơn – Kiếp Bạc — Ven. Dr Thích Nu Hanh Tam and Dr Pham Thi Thanh Huong, Viet Nam</p> <p>14:40 – 14:50 Three dimensions of the authenticity of living heritage: the old tea forests of Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er — Prof. Shao Yong, WHITR-AP, China</p> <p>14:50 – 15:00 Luang Prabang: authenticity through living heritage, people and their practices — Mr Paxa Nyordsavanh, Lao PDR</p> <p>15:00 – 15:10 “Lulik”/Sacred on Living, Spiritual and Associative Heritage of Timor-Leste— Mr Francisco Urbano dos Santos with Mr Luis Nivio de Fátima Soares, Timor-Leste</p> <p>15:10 – 15:40 Facilitated discussion</p>

TIME	SESSION
15:40 – 15:55	Coffee break
15:55 – 17:05	<p>Coordinator: Tran Thi Ngoc Han</p> <p>Plenary session · Theme 4: Communities, knowledge holders and contested values</p> <p><i>Chair: Dr Jihon Kim · Co-chair: Dr Pham Thi Thanh Huong · Rapporteur: Kazuho Nakatani</i></p> <p><i>Coordinator: Tran Thi Ngoc Han</i></p> <p>15:55 – 16:05 Authenticity in Living Cities: Communities, Multiple Values and Interpretation in Wartime Capital Busan and Suwon Hwaseong — Dr Jihon Kim, Republic of Korea</p> <p>16:05 – 16:15 Whose Knowledge Counts as Evidence? Community Custodianship, Living Heritage and the Future of Authenticity in World Heritage Practice— Dr Atousa Momeni, Iran (Islamic Republic of)</p> <p>16:15 – 16:25 Intangible Cultural Heritage and Community Memory – A Determining Component of the Core Authenticity of the Thang Long Imperial Citadel Central Sector— Assoc. Prof. Dang Van Bai, Viet Nam, Dr. Nguyen Thi Thu Trang</p> <p>16:25 – 16:35 Communities, knowledge holders and contested values in Kiribati — Ms Pelea Tehumu, Kiribati</p> <p>16:35 – 16:45 Sambor Prei Kuk and community engagement — Mr Seng Chantha, Cambodia</p> <p>16:45 – 17:05 Facilitated discussion</p>
18:00 – 20:00	<p>Welcome dinner</p> <p>Hosted by the Chairman of the Ha Noi People’s Committee</p>



Tuesday, 29 September 2026

Authenticity through Asia-Pacific Cases

Expected result: Evidence-based findings on how authenticity can be assessed across different heritage contexts.

TIME	SESSION
09:00 – 12:00	Option site visit at Thang Long Ha Noi Citadel Launch of the Kinh Thiên Palace restoration and exhibition (for invited participant only) Thang Long Imperial Citadel Ground-breaking for the reconstruction of the Kinh Thiên Palace Separate programme will be shared with participants
12:30 – 14:00	<i>Lunch and return to the conference venue</i>
14:00 – 15:15	Coordinator: Nominated by Thang Long Citadel Plenary session · Theme 2: Reconstruction, recovery and continuity <i>Chair: Dr Luisa De Marco · Co-chair: Assoc Prof. Tong Trung Tin · Rapporteur: Dr. Li Guanghan</i> <i>Coordinator: Le Anh Thu</i> 14:00 – 14:10 The ICOMOS–ICCROM Guidance for Post-Trauma Reconstruction — Dr Luisa De Marco, ICOMOS 14:10 – 14:20 Heritage recovery in Myanmar: Bagan and the Mandalay earthquake of March 2025 — Dr Kyaw Oo Lwin, Myanmar 14:20 – 14:30 Reconstruction after the 2015 earthquake: Lal Baithak, Kasthamandap and Rato Matsendranath — Mrs Saubhagya Pradhananga Malla, Nepal 14:30 – 14:40 Japanese experience: authenticity, management, dialogue and continuity — Mr Kazuhiko Nishi, Japan 14:40 – 14:50 Reconstruction, recovery and continuity: the case of Preah Vihear Temple — Mr Phin Samnang, Cambodia 14:50 – 15:15 Facilitated discussion
15:15 – 15:30	<i>Coffee break</i>

TIME	SESSION
15:30 – 16:15	Coordinator: Nguyen Lan Huong Plenary session · Theme 5: From regional experience to World Heritage practice <i>Chair: Dr Janhwij Sharma · Rapporteur: Dr. Nguyen Thi Thu Trang</i> <i>Coordinator: Ngo Sy Thanh</i> 15:30 – 15:40 East Rennell: heritage value, tourism and management challenges — Ms Sophie Tali Liligeto, Solomon Islands 15:40 – 15:50: From Cultural Meanings to Verifiable Judgments: Attributes, Evidence and Change at West Lake; Niu Yanan, Research Fellow, (WHITRAP) 15:50 – 16:15 Facilitated discussion: translating the findings into World Heritage processes and national legal and policy frameworks. Chairs of all 5 themes share about regional experience
16:15 – 16:30	<i>Short break</i>
16:30 – 17:45	Plenary · Comparative synthesis <i>Co-chair: Technical Commitee</i> 16:30 – 16:45 Synthesis of the Dialogue: from regional experience to World Heritage practice — Dr Janhwij Sharma, India 16:45 – 17:45 Reports from the five themes: what the cases confirm, challenge or add to existing World Heritage practice and recommendations for the Outcome Document <i>Each rapporteur presents no more than three recommendations</i>

Method. Each laboratory will compare selected cases using the common authenticity-assessment framework. Presentations are to be short and followed by facilitated analysis rather than conventional panel discussion.



Wednesday, 30 September 2026

From Evidence to World Heritage Practice

Expected result: Agreed technical recommendations, practical tools and a defined follow-up process.

TIME	SESSION
08:00 – 08:30	Check-out and luggage loading All participants travel to Ninh Binh after the closing ceremony
08:30 – 09:15	Co-Chairs: Prof. George Okello Abungu and Ambassador Le Thi Hong Van Coordinator: Ngo Sy Thanh Institutional roundtable 1 · Ambassadors and Permanent Delegates <i>Moderator: Amb. Le Thi Hong Van</i>
9:15 – 10:00	Institutional roundtable 2 Craft people, knowledge holders and youth <i>Moderator: Mr. Jonathan Baker</i> artisans, elders, creative professional, universities, communities and youth
10:00 – 10:45	Institutional roundtable 3 · Institutional responsibilities <i>Moderator: Amb. Peter Ngure</i> Responsibilities of States Parties, UNESCO, the Advisory Bodies, Category 2 Centers,
10:45 – 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 – 12:00	The Ha Noi Outcome Document Presentation of the draft Ha Noi Outcome Document — Co-Chairs Adoption of the Ha Noi Outcome Document
12:00 – 12:45	Closing ceremony Remarks by the UNESCO Representative in Viet Nam – Mr Jonathan Baker Remarks by the Director of the World Heritage Centre – Lazare Eloundou Assomo Address by the Vice-Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Viet Nam
12:45 – 13:00	Boarding Lunch boxes provided for the journey
13:00 –14:30	Travel from Ha Noi to Tam Chuc
14:30 – 16:30	Field visit Tam Chuc Pagoda
16:30 – 17:30	Travel from Tam Chuc to Ninh Binh city
17:30	Arrival in Ninh Binh and check-in at Legend and Hoang Son Peace Hotel Address: 98 Trinh Tu, Hoa Lu, Ninh Binh
19:00 – 20:00	Reception hosted by the Ninh Binh Provincial People's Committee at Legend Hotel

Biographies



Lazare Eloundou Assomo

*Director of World Heritage Center;
Co-chair of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity*



Mr. Lazare Eloundou Assomo is a graduate in architecture (Grenoble School of Architecture, France) and in urban planning (DEA Grenoble 1). He began his career as an Associate Researcher at the Centre for Earthen Construction of the Grenoble School of Architecture in 1996. He became in charge of implementing housing projects in Africa, and subsequently of the pedagogical coordination of the Africa 2009 a conservation programme set up by UNESCO's World Heritage Centre and ICCROM and African States Parties to the 1972 Convention. Mr. Eloundou Assomo joined UNESCO in 2003 in the Africa Unit of the World Heritage Centre, where among other things he contributed to the creation of the African World Heritage Fund and the development of the World Heritage Earthen Architecture Programme (WHEAP). From 2008 to 2013, he was Head of the Africa Unit of the World Heritage Centre. During this period, he coordinated several restoration projects in Mozambique, Uganda and Mali, as well as capacity building initiatives in the region. In 2013, Mr. Eloundou Assomo joined the UNESCO office in Bamako and becoming UNESCO's head representative in Mali in 2014. He was in charge of the protection of Mali's cultural heritage while the country was hit by a violent armed conflict. Working tirelessly for the country's heritage he successfully led the reconstruction of the Timbuktu mausoleums and the safeguarding of its ancient manuscripts.

Mr. Eloundou Assomo returned to UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in 2016, initially as Deputy Director of the Heritage Division and of the World Heritage Centre. In 2018, he became Director of the Culture and Emergencies e, coordinating emergency conservation responses to heritage affected by conflicts and disasters and the restitution of cultural property under the 1970 Convention. Mr. Eloundou Assomo was appointed Director of World Heritage in December 2021 and is the author of the book 'African World Heritage: A Remarkable Diversity', co-authored with Ishanlosen Odiaua and published in 2012 by UNESCO.

H.E. Ambassador Le Thi Hong Van

*Director-General, Local and Cultural Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Secretary-General, Viet Nam National Commission for UNESCO*



Ambassador Le Thi Hong Van is a career diplomat with more than two decades of experience in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. She has served as Director-General of the Department of Local and Cultural Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since March 2025 and as Secretary-General of the Viet Nam National Commission for UNESCO since February 2024.

From 2020 to 2023, she was Viet Nam's Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO in Paris. On her return to Ha Noi, she led the Ministry's work on cultural diplomacy and UNESCO affairs before assuming her current role. She is also the Deputy Chairman of the Committee for Women's Advancement of the Ministry.

Earlier in her career, Ambassador Van served as Deputy Director-General of the Multilateral Economic Cooperation Department and of the APEC Viet Nam 2017 Secretariat. She was Viet Nam's Alternate ASEM Senior Official and served at the Embassy of Viet Nam in the Republic of Korea.

Ambassador Van holds a bachelor's degree in international relations from the Diplomatic Academy of Viet Nam and a master's degree in international relations from the University of Warwick, where she studied as a Chevening Scholar. She received a High-level Degree in Politics from the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and a High-level Degree in Public Administration from the National Academy of Public Administration.

She has published a number of books and articles and given lectures on economic and political trends in the Asia – Pacific region, Asia-Europe relations and Viet Nam's international integration, multilateral and cultural diplomacy.

Ambassador Le Thi Hong Van can speak Vietnamese, English and French. She is married with a son and a daughter.

Professor George Okello Abungu

*Australian National University, Canberra and Emeritus
Director General, National Museums of Kenya*

*Archaeologist, and Co-chair of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on
Heritage and Authenticity*



Prof. George H.O. Abungu is a Cambridge-trained archaeologist and Emeritus Director-General of the National Museums of Kenya. He is a recipient of Lifetime Achievement in Defense of Art 2012, by Association for Research into Crime against Art (ARCA), Chevalier dans l'ordre des Arts des Lettres 2012 by the Republic of France and Ordre National Du Lion Chevalier, 2018 by the Republic of Senegal. Prof. Abungu has been an advisor to the Aluka project of the Mellon Foundation, the Global Heritage Fund, Vice President of International Council of Museums (ICOM), and was Member of the International Jury of the UNESCO Melina Mecouri International Prize for Safeguard and Management of Cultural Landscapes. From 2015 to 2020 was appointed by the Minister of

Culture of Germany to advise on the establishment of the Humboldt Forum (Museum), Berlin, Germany and is currently a Member of the UNESCO International Advisory Committee for the Protection of World Heritage Properties in Uzbekistan. He has sat on the World Monuments Watch panel of the World Monument Fund, New York, was Kenya's Representative to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, and Vice-President of its Bureau (2005-2009). He has been a member of the ICOMOS World Heritage Evaluation Committee, is a Fellow of the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies, University of Stellenbosch South Africa and was Elizabeth Eddy Professor of Applied Anthropology, University of Florida, Gainesville, USA. He is the founding Professor of Heritage Studies, at the University of Mauritius and was a Special Adviser to the Director General of ICCROM, Rome. He is Honorary Professor of Heritage Studies at the Australian National University, Canberra and a member of the Scientific Committee of International Alliance for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH). He has numerous publications in the disciplines of archaeology, heritage management, museology, heritage and development, heritage and tourism, heritage and sustainable development, illicit trafficking in cultural property and restitution. His latest publications include National Museums in Africa: reflection on memory, identity and the politics of heritage (2022) Routledge Publishing Company, UK, by Silverman, Raymond, Abungu George H.O and Probst, Peter; The Heritage of the Colonized: Managing Heritage in Africa, Routledge Publishing Company, UK Abungu George. H.O and Ndoro W. (Ed) (2023) and Heritage Authenticity in Theory and Practice in Africa, Springer Nature , Switzerland AG, and UNESCO 7 place de Fontenoy, 75007 Paris, France



Mr. Jonathan Baker

*UNESCO Representative to Viet Nam;
Co-chair of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity*

Mr. Jonathan Baker is the UNESCO Representative and Head of Office in Vietnam since January 2024. He has over 20 years of experience working for UNESCO both at headquarters in Paris and in the field. From 2018 to 2024, Mr. Baker was the Regional Advisor for Science and Head of the Science Unit at the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture for Europe, where he managed UNESCO programs in the natural sciences, environment, and climate change. From 2015 to 2018, he was at the Regional Bureau for Sciences in Latin America and the Caribbean in Montevideo, Uruguay, where he was responsible for coordinating the Man and the Biosphere programme, including biodiversity and climate change. From 2009 to 2015, he was at UNESCO's sub-regional office for Central America and Mexico in San Jose, Costa Rica, where he managed UNESCO's sciences programs, notably in the areas of biodiversity, water and climate change. From 2006 to 2009 he was attaché de cabinet and focal point for the Natural Sciences, strategic planning and the private sector in the office of the Director-General of UNESCO in Paris and from 2003 to 2006, he served within UNESCO's Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme in Paris. Mr. Baker holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from Tufts University and a Juris Doctorate from Tulane University Law School.



Dr. Pham Thi Thanh Huong

*Culture Specialist, UNESCO Representative Office in Viet Nam;
Secretariat of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity*

Dr. Pham Thi Thanh Huong is a Culture Specialist at UNESCO, based at the UNESCO Representative Office in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, where she provides leadership for the Culture team. With over two decades of experience at the intersection of culture, heritage and sustainable development, she specializes in World Heritage, cultural rights, intangible cultural heritage, sustainable tourism, and cultural heritage policy. Her academic and research experience includes serving as a Research Fellow at Western Sydney University (Australia), a Visiting Scholar at Università Luav di Venezia (Italy) and different universities in Viet Nam and South East Asia. She holds a PhD in Cultural Rights and Heritage Management, a Master's degree in Media and Communications and a Bachelor degree in International Relations. Her publications include among others: "Assessment of Public-Private Partnerships at World Heritage sites in Viet Nam"; ...



Ms. Gwenaëlle Bourdin

*Director of the World Heritage Evaluation Unit, ICOMOS;
Technical Committee of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on
Heritage and Authenticity*

Ms. Gwenaëlle Bourdin is Director of the World Heritage Evaluation Unit at the ICOMOS International Secretariat. She has a degree in Economics, History and History of Art and joined ICOMOS in 1998 after obtaining a master in History and Management of French and European Heritage (Panthéon-Sorbonne University). She is currently responsible for the coordination of ICOMOS work on Tentative Lists, Upstream processes and nominations of cultural and mixed properties to the World Heritage List. Ms. Bourdin has attended almost all World Heritage Committee sessions since 2002 on behalf of ICOMOS. She also contributed to the drafting of the reference manual "Preparing a World Heritage nomination" and the "Guidance on developing and revising World Heritage Tentative Lists" prepared by the Advisory Bodies in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre. She has played an active role in the recent nomination reform processes, including the introduction and operationalization of the Preliminary Assessment process to improve the quality of nominations and evaluation processes. She has also participated in numerous expert capacity building workshops around the world on the fundamental principles of the World Heritage Convention.



Dr. Luisa De Marco

*ICOMOS World Heritage Adviser;
Technical Committee of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity*



Dr Luisa De Marco, is an architect, who specialized in Restoration of Monuments (1999), and holds a PhD in Architectural Heritage Conservation (2007). She is an independent consultant after serving 20 years in the Ministry of Cultural Properties, Activities and Tourism (MIBACT) of Italy as conservation architect. In her positions at the MIBACT, Luisa accumulated extensive knowledge and expertise on issues concerning protection, management and promotion of cultural heritage and landscape and on technical aspects of tangible heritage preservation as well as in preservation budget planning. Over the years, she has been charged with coordination responsibilities in a number of applied research studies that have led her to work with professionals, scholars

and academics from different fields (archaeologists, geographers, forest scientists, geologists, botanists, engineers, among others), thus developing a robust interdisciplinary approach. Responsible for the coordination of the management of the World Heritage property “Porto Venere, Cinque Terre and the Island” since 2007, Dr. Luisa De Marco has accumulated experience on management mechanisms, efficiency and effectiveness in complex inter-institutional contexts. Since 2004 she has been engaged in initiatives aimed at evaluating and to sustaining the setting up of legal, planning and technical instruments and frameworks in European (Georgia) and non-European countries (Nepal). Dr. Luisa De Marco also has a 15 - year experience in didactic and training activities in post-graduate courses with the University of Genoa and professional trainings with International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), including: ITUC-03 on integrated urban conservation (May 2004), Course on conservation for Azerbaijani civil servants (April 2016), Course on built Heritage Conservation - module on Heritage Impact Assessment (Rome, October 2016), Course on People Centred Approaches to Conservation (Macedonia-Albania, October 2016), Course on Heritage Impact Assessment (Vigan, Philippines). She has worked with major Italian, European and international cultural heritage agencies as heritage and conservation expert and lecturer including ICOMOS International, UNESCO, ICCROM, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Having become ICOMOS expert and adviser in World Heritage matters since 2006, Luisa holds extensive experience in protection, management and conservation issues and requirements for World Heritage properties, having assessed more than 50 World Heritage nominations, including the assessment of the adequacy of the management system, legal protection and state of conservation of more than 30 properties, as well as evaluation and monitoring missions.



Dr. Jihon Kim

*Chief of Policy, Korean National Commission for UNESCO;
Technical Committee of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on
Heritage and Authenticity*

Dr. Jihon Kim is Chief of Policy at the Korean National Commission for UNESCO and an Adjunct Professor at the Graduate School of World Heritage Studies, Konkuk University. She also serves as a Board Member of ICOMOS Korea and Secretary-General of the ICOMOS International Committee on Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites (ICOMOS-ICIP). She previously served at the Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Korea to UNESCO and was seconded as a Research Fellow to UNIDROIT (International Institute for the Unification of Private Law) in Rome. Dr. Kim was also a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the Harvard University Asia Center. She holds a B.A. in Archaeology and Art History and an M.A. and Ph.D. in International Studies from Seoul National University. Her publications include *Non-State Actors in the Protection of Cultural Heritage* (Springer, 2021).





Professor Toshiyuki KONO

*Honorary Distinguished Professor at Kyushu University;
Honorary President of ICOMOS;
Technical Committee of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on
Heritage and Authenticity*

Prof. Toshiyuki Kono is Honorary Distinguished Professor at Kyushu University and Honorary President of ICOMOS. His research fields cover private international law and heritage law. He has been invited to give lectures at leading academic institutions and international organisations, including the Hague Academy of International Law (2013) and to deliver a keynote lecture for the 25th anniversary of the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects (2020). He served as ICOMOS president from 2017 to 2020. His recent publication includes "A Heritage Ecosystem Approach: Context and Current Deliberations" in the special issue of the Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development on Heritage Ecosystem: Possibilities and Potentials. In 2019, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation awarded Prof. Toshiyuki Kono the Reimar Lüst Prize for International Scholarly and Cultural Exchanges.

Dr. Janhwij Sharma

*Additional Director General, Archaeological Survey of India
Technical Committee of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity*



Dr. Janhwij Sharma is a conservation architect by training and currently holds the position of Additional Director General (Conservation / World Heritage), at the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). He joined ASI in 2008 and in the last 16 years his prime responsibility has been to finalise conservation programmes of all circles and monitoring conservation of ASI monuments within and outside the country. He has also spearheaded the conservation works outside India, noticeably in Cambodia wherein the conservation of Ta Prohm temple, a unique tree-temple site, has received acclaim from the UNESCO led ICC. He has undertaken a number of initiatives during his tenure in ASI, most important being the formulation of National Policy for the Conservation of Protected Monuments,

Archaeological Sites and Remains which was adopted by the Government of India in 2014. Currently, he is working towards the preparation of a conservation manual, and is assisting all field offices in developing Conservation Plans. Dr. Sharma has been in charge of World Heritage matters on behalf of ASI for the past 14 years and is the National Focal Point for India. During his tenure, 16 monuments and sites including six of the ASI's monuments, Rani ki Wav, Hill forts of Rajasthan (4 forts), Nalanda Mahavihara, Dholavira: A Harappan City, Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple, Hoysala Temples of Southern Karnataka and Moidams of Charaideo, Assam have become world heritage properties. He has also guided and given technical support to a number of world heritage related proposals from different ministries, state governments, local bodies. Dr. Sharma has participated in a number of workshops and programmes across India and abroad and lectured extensively on conservation and world heritage matters. He has a number of publications that includes a book "Architectural Heritage, Ladakh" published by INTACH. He has done extensive architectural documentation of monasteries in Ladakh and Zangskar and is a keen traveller and an avid amateur architectural photographer. He also writes poetry that revolves around monuments, architecture, nature and life.





Dr. Matthew Whincop

*Secretary-General, ICOMOS – ICAHM
Technical Committee of the APA Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity*

Dr Matthew Whincop has 30 years of experience on a variety of archaeological research and cultural heritage projects across Australasia, and the Middle East. As a member of ICOMOS and Secretary General of the International Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM), Matt is actively involved in promoting international standards of excellence in archaeological practice and management, and in contributing to the safeguarding of World Heritage for future generations. Matt has chaired multiple conference sessions on important themes in archaeological management, such as climate change, recognition of Indigenous communities as rightsholders, and principles of good management. Matt also chairs a monthly ICAHM webinar series.

Dr. Nguyen Thanh Quang

*Director Of The Thang Long-Ha Noi Heritage Conservation Center
Technical Committee of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity*



Currently serving as Director of the Thang Long-Ha Noi Heritage Conservation Center, under the Ha Noi People's Committee, with responsibility for the management, conservation, and promotion of the World Heritage Site - the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long-Ha Noi, as well as the Special National Relic Site - the Co Loa Citadel.

With many years of professional experience in cultural heritage management, conservation, and value enhancement, he provides leadership and strategic guidance in the development, coordination, and implementation of long-term conservation programs for the Thang Long Imperial Citadel. His work has included the development of the Vision for the Conservation and Enhancement of the Thang Long Imperial Citadel, the archaeological strategy, and the heritage interpretation and the values of heritage promotion strategies.

He has directly overseen the research and implementation of the "Conservation, Restoration and Reconstruction Project for the spatial configuration of Kinh Thien Palace and its main hall." The project is grounded in interdisciplinary research encompassing archaeology, historical records, visual archival, architecture, and royal materials and rituals, and has been developed through close consultation with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS, and international experts. At its core is the integration of scientific research, heritage management, and international cooperation, ensuring that decisions concerning site enhancement, archaeological investigation, conservation, and reconstruction are embedded within a comprehensive strategy and guided by scientific evidence and the principles of authenticity.

His practical experience at the Thang Long Imperial Citadel, particularly in developing a long-term vision, archaeological strategy, heritage interpretation strategy, and research framework for the reconstruction of Kinh Thien Main Hall, provides a significant case study for international discussions on authenticity, reconstruction, and the management of World Heritage properties in the Asia-Pacific context.

Ms. Nasiphi Chumisa Gwagwa

*Associate Project Officer, Conference Coordinator of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre;
Secretariat of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity*



Nasiphi Chumisa Gwagwa is an arts, culture and heritage professional with close to twenty years of experience in cultural policy, cultural diplomacy, strategic partnerships and the media. She currently works at UNESCO as a Project Officer at the World Heritage Centre, where she is a member of the Secretariat of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity. She previously coordinated and served on the Scientific Committee of the International Conference on Heritage Authenticity in Africa (Nairobi, 2025) and contributed to the Nairobi Outcome on Heritage and Authenticity.

At UNESCO, she has also supported the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, including projects funded by the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD). She is the author of “Sustaining Livelihoods, Protecting Heritage: A Shared Future for People and Places” (World Heritage Review, No. 109), and a contributor to Indigenous Knowledge, Ancestral Places: Navigating Change in UNESCO-Designated Sites. She is the founder of ARTVISORY AFRICA and was previously Strategic Partnerships Manager at Design Indaba. She has served on the board of The Incubator for Social Entrepreneurship.

She is a doctoral candidate (DBA) at Paris School of Business, researching the governance and implementation of International cultural treaties in South Africa. She holds a Master of Arts in Cultural Management from Paris School of Business, an MBA from IESA Arts & Culture School and a BA in International Relations and Politics, Art History and English from Rhodes University.

Ms. Mst Mohsina Akter Banu

*Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change;
National Focal Point for World Heritage, Bangladesh;*

Speaker

Ms. Mohsina Akter Banu is a Deputy Secretary of the Government of Bangladesh, currently serving in the Forest-2 Section of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). Her responsibilities cover a broad range of national and international issues relating to biodiversity conservation, wildlife, forests and international environmental conventions. In her current role, she is engaged in communication and coordination with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the World Heritage Committee under the World Heritage Convention. Her portfolio also includes the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECM), wildlife conservation, migratory birds, tiger and elephant conservation, and international biodiversity initiatives including the Big Cat Alliance. She has actively contributed to Bangladesh's international biodiversity engagement. In July 2026, she presented Bangladesh's national experience on OECM in Japan at an Asia-Pacific programme organized by the Ministry of the Environment, Japan, supporting regional discussions and preparation of inputs for the CBD COP17. In April 2026, she also presented Bangladesh's experience and perspectives related to the Aichi Declaration at a regional meeting in Bangkok. Currently, she is working as a Technical Expert supporting the process of declaring the Halda River as a UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) site, contributing to technical assessment, coordination and preparation of relevant documentation. A member of the 27th BCS Administration Cadre, Ms. Banu has previously served at the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Authority. She holds a Master's degree in Project Management from the United Kingdom. Her professional interests include World Heritage, biodiversity governance, OECMs, wildlife conservation, community participation, climate resilience and international environmental cooperation.



Mr. Phin Samnang

Director of Department of Research, Training and Documentation, National Authority for Preah Vihear, Cambodia;

Speaker



Mr. Seng Chantha

Acting Director of Department of Environment, National Authority for Sambor Prei Kuk, Cambodia;

Speaker



Ms. Pelea Tehumu

Acting Director of Culture and Museum Division, Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs, Kiribati;

Speaker

Mr. Paxa Nyordsavanh

National Focal Point for World Heritage, Lao PDR;

Speaker

Career

- 2011- March 2018: Technical Officer at the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly of the Lao PDR.
- April 2018-March 2023: Technical Staff at the Department of Heritage, Ministry of Culture and Tourism.
- April 2023-Present: Deputy Head of World Heritage Management Division, Department of Heritage.

Work Experience Summary

Monitoring the state of conservation of World Heritage Sites; developing regulations and measures to protect and promote the values of the world heritage sites; leading the Heritage Impact Assessment process for National and World Heritage Sites; nominating national heritage sites for inscription on the World Heritage List; and coordinating, sharing, and exchanging lessons on World Heritage Site management with local authorities and international partners. Coordinate and promote the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions between government agencies and civil society organizations (CSOs), and assist in the completion of the QPR 2024.

Education and Training

- 2005-2010: National University of Laos, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Bachelor degree of Arts in International Relations.
- 2014-2016: Master degree of Law, Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies (GSICS), Kobe University, Japan.
- November 2018: Trainer at the Training on the Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural Heritage Site, Organized by UNESCO Asia Pacific Office.
- 14-25 October 2019: Attended the International Course for Culture Heritage Management, Organized by The Education Center for Traditional Culture Korea National University of Cultural Heritage, Republic of Korea.
- 15-19 February 2021: Attend the Training Workshop on the Disaster Risk Management for the World Heritage Sites in Lao PDR Organized by UNESCO Asia Pacific Office.
- 22-26 April 2024: Attended the Training Workshop on Heritage Impact Assessment in the Southeast Asian Context organized by SEAMEO-SPAFA.
- 09-20 February 2025: Attending the Workshop on “The Youth Cultural Exchange Program on World Heritage Management and Community Development” Siem Reap, Cambodia organized by APSARA.
- Since 2022-2025: Participated in Reactive Monitoring Missions (RMM) alongside representatives from the World Heritage Centre (WHC) and ICOMOS as a site manager from the central authority to World Heritage Sites in the Lao PDR. These included the RMM in 2022 to the Town of Luang Prabang, the RMM in 2023 to Vat Phou and Associated Ancient Settlements within the Champasak Cultural Landscape, and the RMM in March 2025 to the Town of Luang Prabang.
- 24-28 August 2026: Attended the Capacity-Building Workshop on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage for Lao PDR (Third Session), Co-Organizers: CRIHAP and Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Lao PDR.



Dr. Kyaw Oo Lwin

Director General of Department of Archaeology and National Museum, Ministry of Culture, Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar;

Speaker



Mr. Than Zaw Oo

Director of World Heritage Sites Division, Department of Archaeology and National Museum, Ministry of Culture, Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar;

Speaker



Mrs. Saubhagya Pradhananga Malla

Joint Secretary and Head of Culture Division, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Nepal;

Speaker

Mrs. Saubhagya Pradhananga is a dedicated heritage professional and senior government official of Nepal, currently serving as Joint Secretary and Head of the Culture Division at the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Government of Nepal. She was recently transferred to this position from her role as Director General, Department of Archaeology, Government of Nepal.

In her current capacity, she is primarily responsible for national policy formulation and coordination for the preservation and conservation of Nepal's cultural heritage, including tangible, intangible, and documentary heritage. Her work focuses on strengthening heritage protection, conservation, management, and sustainable development through effective policies and institutional coordination.

Mrs. Pradhananga has extensive professional experience in the conservation and management of historic monuments and cultural heritage, including Nepal's UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Following the devastating 2015 Gorkha earthquake, which severely affected numerous historic monuments and World Heritage properties, she played an important role in coordinating heritage salvage, conservation, and restoration initiatives, with particular emphasis on maintaining cultural authenticity and promoting traditional craftsmanship and knowledge.

She remains committed to safeguarding Nepal's rich and diverse cultural heritage and advancing sustainable, resilient, inclusive, and community-oriented approaches to heritage conservation, while strengthening the long-term preservation and management of cultural properties for future generations.

Ms. Sophie Tali Liligeto

Donor Programme Coordinator, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development/Solomon Islands National Commission for UNESCO;

Speaker

Ms. Sophie Tali Liligeto is a secondary school teacher by profession and currently works at the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development as donor program coordinator and Solomon Islands National Commission for UNESCO, Solomon Islands. She is committed to reviving intergenerational learning spaces and strengthening community-driven initiatives that safeguard cultural identity while advancing development goals.



Mr. Luis Nívio de Fátima Soares

Executive Secretary of Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO, Timor-Leste;

Speaker



Mr. Francisco Urbano dos Santos

Culture Specialist of Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO, Timor-Leste;

Speaker



Prof. Shao Yong

*Professor, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University, China;
Secretary-General of WHITR-AP, and Director of WHITR-AP Shanghai*



Shao Yong is a tenured professor at the College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University, China. She serves as Secretary-General of the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (WHITR-AP) and Director of WHITR-AP Shanghai, which has organized more than 50 capacity-building activities in collaboration with UNESCO WHC, ICOMOS, ICCROM, and other international organizations and state parties of the World Heritage Convention. She is Vice-President of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Vernacular Architecture (CIAV) and an expert member of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Earthen Architectural Heritage (ISCEAH).

In addition, she is Director of the Heritage Conservation and Cultural Revitalization Institute of Shanghai Tongji Urban Planning and Design Institute Co., Ltd., Deputy Secretary-General of the Academic Committee on Historic and Cultural City Planning of the Urban Planning Society of China, and a member of the editorial boards of Built Heritage and Heritage Architecture. In 2021, Prof. Shao Yong was awarded the title of “Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres” by France. In 2024, she was elected as a member of the French Academy of Architecture.

She has long been dedicated to research, teaching, and practice in the fields of urban and rural development history, and the conservation and management of World Heritage, historic cities, towns and villages. Her work focuses on a heritage-based and people-centered approach to urban regeneration, rural revitalization. She has led and completed more than 200 heritage conservation projects. Her publications include *Equilibre et Harmonie: Protection et Mise en Valeur du Patrimoine Architectural, Urban et Paysager en France*, *World Heritage in China - Historic Cities*, and *Vernacular and Earthen Architecture towards Local Development - Proceedings of the 2019 ICOMOS CIAV & ISCEAH International Conference*, along with more than 70 academic papers.

She has received the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation three times and has been awarded more than 30 national-level prizes for planning and design, heritage conservation, and education.

Prof. Tong Trung Tin

*Assoc. Professor Tong Trung Tin
President of the Vietnam Association of Archaeologists*

Speaker





Ven. Dr. Thich Nu Hanh Tam

Senior lecturer, Tran Nhan Tong Institute, Vietnam National University (VNU);

Speaker

Ven. Dr. Thich Nu Hanh Tam (civil name: Nguyen Thi Kim Chi) is a distinguished Buddhist scholar and a senior lecturer at the Tran Nhan Tong Institute - Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU). She also serves as the Standing Deputy Director of the Center for Religious Studies, specializing in Buddhist Cultural Heritage, under the Vietnam Buddhist Research Institute.

Before her current tenure in Vietnam, she spent years as a lecturer at National Kaohsiung University in Taiwan, developing a profound expertise in classical Han-Nom texts, textual criticism, and Buddhist philology. Her primary research focuses on the preservation of tangible and intangible Buddhist heritage, the intellectual legacy of the Truc Lam Zen Sect, and the integration of indigenous wisdom with contemporary environmental conservation. Reflecting the core themes of living and spiritual heritage, her recent work bridges traditional Buddhist eco-philosophy with the sustainable protection of cultural-ecological landscapes.



Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Kim

Department of Global History, Faculty of History and Culture, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University (VNU);

Speaker

Nguyen Van Kim is Professor of the Department of Global History, Faculty of History and Culture, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi. He received his PhD from Vietnam National University, Hanoi on Japan's sakoku policy in 1999 after several years of conducting field-research and taking PhD courses at Kanazawa and Tokyo universities, Japan. Prof. Nguyen Van Kim is former Vice-Rector of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, in charge of scientific affairs and currently is the Vice President of The National Council for Cultural Heritage, Vietnam and Member of The World Heritage Committee, UNESCO.

Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Kim has written and edited more than twenty books and over 350 articles on the Japanese and Vietnamese histories, trading networks and diplomatic relations in the East Asian region. He is also interested in culture and heritage preservation of Vietnam. Prof. Kim has been research fellow at Tokyo University, Japan; visiting professor at Inha University, Seoul National University, Republic of Korea, and participated in a large number of national and international conferences.

Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Minh

University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi

Speaker

Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Minh received his PhD in Cultural Resource Management from Kanazawa University, Japan, in 2019. His doctoral dissertation focused on the socio-ecological linkages for sustainability by investigating the traditional ecological knowledge of the Hmong people in the Dong Van Karst Plateau, Ha Giang, Vietnam. Previously, he completed his Master's degree in the same field at Kanazawa University in 2016 and

earned a Bachelor of Arts in History (High-Quality Program) from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, in 2010. Currently, Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Minh serves as a Lecturer at the Faculty of History, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, a position he has held since 2010.

His main research interests include cultural resource and heritage management, indigenous knowledge, and the development of the heritage economy. Throughout his academic career, Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Minh has published more than 20 articles and scientific papers in reputable domestic and international journals and conference proceedings. His research covers a wide range of critical topics, including archaeological site management, urban cultural spaces, heritage preservation experiences from Japan and East Asian countries, as well as the development of cultural tourism products and cultural industries associated with traditional heritage in Vietnam.



Assoc. Prof. Tran Tan Van

Vietnam Institute of Geosciences and Mineral Resources (VIGMR)

Speaker

Prof. Tran Tan Van is a Senior Geoscientist affiliated with the Vietnam Institute of Geosciences and Mineral Resources (VIGMR). His primary expertise encompasses karst geology, geohazard assessment, and heritage conservation and promotion. With more than forty years of working experience, Prof. Van plays an active role in the development of the Vietnam Geoparks Network and the global geopark and geoh heritage community, serving as an evaluator/revalidator for several UNESCO Global Geopark missions. He also participates in a number of Vietnam's World Heritage nominations.



Dr. Atousa Momeni

Director-General, Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia, under the auspices of UNESCO (Tehran ICH Centre)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dang Van Bai

Vice Chairman of the National Cultural Heritage Council;

Speaker

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dang Van Bai is one of Vietnam's leading experts in the field of cultural heritage conservation and management, with a career spanning over 50 years. He formerly served as Vice Chairman of the National Cultural Heritage Council, Vice Chairman of the Vietnam Cultural Heritage Association, and Director of the Department of Cultural Heritage (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism) from 1997 to 2009.

Through his continuous contributions, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dang Van Bai is regarded as a key "architect" in shaping Vietnam's legal framework and policies regarding cultural heritage conservation.

He holds a Bachelor's degree in History (specializing in Museology) from Lomonosov Moscow State University (Russia, 1972) and a Doctorate in Architecture (specializing in Urban Architectural Conservation) from the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy in Bulgaria (1983); he was awarded the title of Associate Professor in Cultural Studies in 2009.

He served as Vietnam's representative to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (2013 - 2017) and as President of ICOM Vietnam (2002 - 2009). Additionally, he directly oversaw and participated in the preparation of nomination dossiers for numerous Vietnamese heritage sites recognized by UNESCO, including tangible heritages such as the Complex of Hue Monuments, Ha Long Bay, Hoi An Ancient Town, My Son Sanctuary, Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park, the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long, and the Trang An Landscape Complex, as well as intangible cultural heritage elements like Hue Royal Court Music, the Space of Gong Culture in the Central Highlands, and Quan ho Bac Ninh folk songs.

Mr. Kazuhiko Nishi

Chief Senior Specialist for Cultural Properties, Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan

Speaker



Dr. Nguyen Thi Thu Trang

Dr. Nguyen Thi Thu Trang is a lecturer at the Faculty of Heritage and Ethnic Culture, Ho Chi Minh City University of Culture. She possesses extensive experience in the field of intangible cultural heritage, particularly regarding heritage safeguarding and management, inventorying, and the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. She has participated in the preparation of numerous nomination dossiers for UNESCO and Vietnam's periodic national reports, while also contributing to research, documentation, and capacity-building activities related to heritage safeguarding.

Her research focuses on community-based heritage safeguarding, the ecomuseum approach, and the interrelationships between cultural heritage, the environment, and local communities. She is particularly interested in the role of communities as the bearers and practitioners of living heritage, as well as in exploring how heritage can contribute to sustainable community development while maintaining continuity and cultural diversity. Dr. Trang also contributes to policy formulation, professional training, and capacity building for cultural administrators and heritage practitioners, emphasizing participatory approaches and the safeguarding of heritage within its specific social, cultural, and environmental contexts.



Niu Yanan

Research Fellow, World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP)

Topic: From Cultural Meanings to Verifiable Judgments: Attributes, Evidence and Change at West Lake

Abstracts



Reconstructing Authenticity: How the Kinh Thiên Palace Research Advances the Classification of Authenticity for World Heritage Practice

Dr. Nguyen Thanh Quang

Director Of The Thang Long-Ha Noi Heritage Conservation Center

The reconstruction of the Kinh Thien Main Palace is a key component of the “Vision for the Central Axis of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long (2025–2030),” a plan approved by the World Heritage Committee following Decision 48 COM7B.25 at its 48th session in Busan, South Korea. In this decision, the Committee commended Vietnam for systematizing existing knowledge and assessing the reliability of information sources. According to the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS, however, further clarification is required regarding the reliability of the documentation and the methods for authenticating specific architectural components to ensure they can be easily verified and identified within the proposed design options.

Practical experience has shown us that the pivotal element in the reconstruction dossier for the Kinh Thien Palace is the strategy for preserving and showcasing archaeological remains and cultural strata that span over 1,300 years of history, as these constitute the true Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the site. Another crucial element is how to assess the authenticity of the reconstruction data, because this reconstruction serves as an interpretation tool for the attributes of the site. To identify and categorize the authenticity for the Le Dynasty Kinh Thien Palace reconstruction project, the research team employed a toolkit for gathering and evaluating the reliability of information sources, using it as an interdisciplinary assessment framework. Specifically, this involved a color-coded matrix comprising five data categories: (1) historical documents, (2) archaeology, (3) imagery, (4) domestic comparisons, and (5) international comparisons. The Thang Long – Hanoi Heritage Conservation Center proposed an additional criterion, which is the intrinsic value of archaeological artifacts discovered at the site, as these objects contain information regarding the techniques, methods, periods of use, and the owners who had them created. Fifty components or details - belonging to different parts ranging from the foundation to the superstructure, and the roof of Kinh Thien Palace - were authenticated using this toolkit. The reliability of information for these architectural elements is closely monitored to make sure each possesses a clear database and verification method. Elements with little remaining documentation are cross-referenced and designed based on contemporary structures to make sure the overall form and style of the palace are appropriate with its period. Finally, the color codes are added up to identify the level of authenticity of individual components and that of the structure

as a whole. The results demonstrate that the architectural plan for the reconstruction of Kinh Thien Palace is not only clearly authenticated but also quantifiable, verifiable, and transparent, and this can be seen through a system of design drawings.

The paper presents methods for identifying and assessing the authenticity of documentation regarding the reconstruction of the Kinh Thien Palace. It also proposes practical recommendations for the Hanoi Outcome Document concerning destroyed structures whose reconstruction aims at safeguarding the authenticity of its attributes and its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).





Heritage Ecosystems: Why Do We Need a New Approach?

Prof. Toshiyuki Kono

*Honorary Distinguished Professor at Kyushu University and
Honorary President of ICOMOS*

The Nara Document on Authenticity marked a fundamental shift in the understanding of authenticity. Building upon the Venice Charter, it broadened the range of sources through which authenticity may be assessed and, more importantly, recognised that judgments concerning heritage values and the credibility of information sources must be situated within their particular cultural contexts. In doing so, it opened the concept of authenticity to cultural diversity and to dimensions extending beyond material fabric.

Thirty years later, however, new questions have become increasingly visible. While the Nara Document recognises the responsibility of cultural communities for heritage, its principal framework for assessing authenticity remains centred on values and sources of information. Less fully developed are relational questions: by whom are traditions and techniques sustained; for whom do use and function remain meaningful; and whose spirit, feeling and knowledge are involved?

The Kintaikyo Bridge illustrates this issue. Its wooden spans have been repeatedly renewed over centuries, yet continuity has been maintained through traditional building techniques, structural knowledge, location, use and function, and the bridge's enduring relationship with the local community. Its authenticity therefore cannot be understood solely through the survival of original material. It also depends upon the continuing relationships among people, knowledge, practice, place and function.

The silk heritage of Gunma raises a different but related question. The four components of the World Heritage property Tomioka Silk Mill and Related Sites form only a small part of a much wider heritage shaped by sericulture farmers, silk-reeling and weaving activities, technical knowledge, local memories, related heritage places and continuing forms of silk production. Looking only at the designated components risks separating them from the wider relationships through which their meanings were historically created and continue to be sustained.

The Nairobi Outcome represents an important further step. It describes heritage as community-centred, pluralistic and dynamic, emphasises the interconnectedness of tangible and intangible, natural and cultural

heritage, and places communities and knowledge holders more clearly within the understanding and assessment of authenticity. It thereby brings many of these relational dimensions to the forefront.

Taken together, Nara and Nairobi invite a further question: how should we understand the relationships among places, people, practices, knowledge systems and environments through

which heritage values and authenticity are sustained over time? Looking at these relationships can reveal continuity despite changes in individual elements, bring otherwise overlooked actors and connections into view, and situate particular heritage places within the wider networks of practices, memories and environments that give them meaning. Such a relational perspective is particularly relevant in a changing world, because it allows us to examine not only what is preserved or lost, but also how heritage relationships persist, evolve and are reconfigured through change.

The heritage ecosystem offers one possible conceptual lens for examining such relationships more systematically. Rather than replacing the insights of Nara or Nairobi, it seeks to bring them into a more integrated relational framework. It asks how different elements may change, disappear, be renewed or acquire new meanings, while the relationships through which heritage values and functions are sustained may continue, adapt or be reconfigured.

Because such a framework operates at a higher level of abstraction, it may also provide a way of accommodating different regional and cultural configurations of heritage while retaining a common conceptual language within the universal framework of the World Heritage Convention. In this sense, the heritage ecosystem may offer a means of moving from the recognition of diversity and interconnectedness towards a more integrated understanding of authenticity in a changing world.



Where we stand with authenticity after three decades since the Nara Document

Dr. Luisa De Marco
ICOMOS World Heritage Adviser

This paper reflects on thirty years of debate on authenticity in cultural heritage since the 1994 Nara Conference, arguing that the concept needs contextual understanding and continued dialogue to be useful in practice. It traces how authenticity moved from the religious and legal spheres, through art, into heritage conservation, where the Venice Charter mentioned it only briefly and left it as a reference concept. Nara marked a decisive shift by recognising authenticity as relational rather than absolute: it depends on the nature and significance of heritage and on the cultural context in which values are identified and understood. Respect for cultural diversity therefore became central, although deepening cross-cultural understanding has not progressed and non-Western authenticity-related concepts remain only partially mapped despite regional follow-up meetings.

Persistent, unresolved ambiguities in the way in which authenticity is evoked limit its operational value. Its integration into the World Heritage system through the Operational Guidelines conflated attributes of authenticity with those underpinning Outstanding Universal Value. The author stresses the interplay between tangible and intangible dimensions and the possibility of expert and traditional knowledge working together, particularly in post-disaster recovery. This is illustrated through three reconstruction cases: the Duomo of Venzona (Italy), the Kasubi Tombs of Buganda Kings (Uganda), and the Temple of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción (Mexico). Each combined expert knowledge with community participation and traditions.

Recently, authenticity has been sidelined in favour of sustainability and resilience, concepts that lack comparable operational depth. The paper argues that authenticity remains vital when contextualised and negotiated, and when heritage is understood as embedded in its physical and socio-cultural environment. Decisions on conservation and transmission should emerge from participatory processes that combine expert and traditional knowledge, cultural understanding, and reflection on the consequences of interventions. Such processes cannot guarantee universally satisfactory outcomes, but they make results understandable and acceptable, and frame conservation as a collective endeavour that respects the past, adds meaning to it, and preserves future generations' ability to use their inheritance.

From Nara to Nairobi and the international reflection on authenticity

Prof. George Okello Abungu, Australian National University, Canberra

This talk places the discussion of authenticity within the lenses of Nara and Nairobi. The Venice Charter has remained the foundational document for heritage management at global level for fifty years. The Nara document introduced new thinking into heritage management including the role of communities, tangible and intangible, spirit and place. However for over thirty years while these concepts are widely talked about, practically there is still a huge gap between theory and practice. The Nairobi Outcome Document is a critical reflection of on the omission and has placed people/ communities at the centre of heritage dialogue and practice. This presentation critically analyzes the differences between Nara and Nairobi and suggest what Hanoi can contribute towards addressing the gaps and existing challenges in addition to enriching the global heritage practices through Asia -Pacific experiences.



01

Networks and Linkages: Revisiting Authenticity in the Asian Context*Dr. Janhwij Sharma**ADG (Conservation / World Heritage) Archaeological Survey of India Dharohar Bhawan*

Authenticity, as framed in paragraph 82 of the Operational Guidelines, is often assessed within a boundary or vicinity of a World Heritage property. With the exception of “other internal and external factors,” each listed attribute is tested as a physical quality internal to the property. Much of the heritage of the Asia-Pacific, especially the region spanned by the Indian Ocean, however, is authentic not just as an object but as a relationship. This paper proposes that the heritage of this region be also viewed through the lens of networks and linkages as a distinct relational component of authenticity.

A network may be understood as a system of interconnectivity across nodes – tangible and / or intangible markers of culture embedded within built / natural ecosystem. Linkages are defined as processes within and across these nodes, shaped by attributes such as the natural elements, communities, mobility, knowledge systems, beliefs, and practices. The distinction “network as structure, linkage as process” is crucial, but together, they reveal the dynamic relationships that bind and sustain the nodes.

To treat networks and linkages as a critical component for assessing authenticity, five perspectives are being proposed: historical or traditional veracity; persistent or traceable transformation; interchangeable or reciprocal heritage; custodial or management practices; and legibility or physical traceability.

Two examples are being given to substantiate these components critical to establish holistic understanding of Authenticity: Jingkieng Jri Cultural Landscapes of Meghalaya demonstrates authenticity through linkages between communities, forests, water systems, and customary institutions. At an oceanic scale, Project Mausam, launched by India in 2014, explores the seafaring world and documents the crisscrossing networks across the Indian Ocean Region, where various nodes interconnect to form a wider maritime network. In the archipelagic and maritime region of the Asia-Pacific, the sea is not merely a space between nodes but the medium through which they transformed and were sustained. Of the recognised attributes, “location and setting” comes closest to capturing this, yet understood within the context of vicinity, it alone cannot account for heritage that is distributed rather than concentrated.

Authenticity in a Changing World- Pyu Ancient Cities and Bagan, Myanmar

Mr Than Zaw Oo, Myanmar

Speculation on the term of the “Heritage”, there has been globally identified as the four components such as, identification, value, threat and protection in the World Heritage Convention, 1972. In the meanwhile, authenticity in heritage, especially in cultural heritage/property concerned, it is vital role for examined broadly. At result of it, there has been determined in- “...the property should meet the test of authenticity in design, material, workmanship and setting; authenticity does not limit consideration to original form and structure but includes all subsequent modifications and additions over the course of time, which in themselves possess artistic or historical values... (O.P.,1977. Para 9, pp.3).” After twenty-two years implementation and engagement, the Nara Document on Authenticity, 1994 which has strongly emphasized that it could be considered as “1. ...authenticity in conservation practice is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity...2. ... The diversity of cultures and heritage in our world is an irreplaceable source of spiritual and intellectual richness for all humankind...(para.4) for the conducting in those who work in the heritage sector. It has been mainly guided in three decades for the protection measure in the cultural heritage of the material fabric and spiritual tradition/knowledge. Nowadays, due to the human nature, the World or the Earth is rapidly changed which is known as the term of “Development”. The concept of Authenticity is echoed that it is to be “...Authenticity is not static; it is ongoing process. In many traditions..., regular rebuilding or renewal using traditional techniques is vital keeping the heritage alive...(Internet)”.

As above-mentioned assumption and evaluation situation, Myanmar has engaged and ratified in the World Heritage Convention, 1972 on April 29’1994. As a one of the member states in World Heritage Convention, 1972, Myanmar has been closely cooperated and collaborated with the UNESCO, respective state parties, renowned and prominent institutions, researchers and scholars to safeguard and protect to cultural heritage in Myanmar. After signed in twenty years, Myanmar can be a flagship with the first World Heritage Site of Pyu Ancient Cities (2014; Criteria ii, iii, iv). Accelerating with after five years, Myanmar also gained the second World Cultural Heritage site which is named Bagan (2019; Criteria iii, iv, vi). Those two world heritage sites are mainly identified as the archaeological site and historic city for ancient Myanmar cultural succession. These two cultural heritage sites reveal to strongly exchange with Buddhist-Indic cultural context.

The serial sites of the Pyu Ancient Cities consist of the three walled

cities of Halin, Beikthano, and Sri Ksetra the located in the Dry Zone of the Ayeyarwaddy River, central Myanmar. The Pyu Ancient Cities provide exceptional testimony of the introduction of Buddhism into two thousand years ago and attendant economic, socio-political and cultural transformation which resulted in the rise of the first, largest and longest-lived urbanized settlements of the region up until the 9th Century A.D. The Pyu showed a striking capacity to assimilate the Indic influences and swiftly move into a significant degree of re-invention. These earliest Buddhist city-states played a seminal role in the process of transmitting the literary, architectural and ritual traditions of Pali-based Buddhism to other societies in the sub-region where they continue to be practiced up to the present. (extracted from Nomination Dossier, 2013)

Bagan is an extensive landscape of monuments and other features located on the Ayeyarwaddy River in the central dry zone of Myanmar. It was the heart of the largest Buddhist empire of its time, the centre of an economic, socio-political and cultural network in active exchange with other parts of the wider region. With its peak period being from the 11th to 13th Centuries CE, and it was the primary focus of religious activity in this period- the Bagan Period. The Buddhist tradition of merit-making was a powerful force in the creation of Bagan. It remains central to Myanmar Buddhism today. This includes support for the sangha (monastic community), as well as festivals, celebrations, rituals and contributions made to the maintenance, repair and reconstruction of monuments. (extracted from Nomination Dossier, 2018)

As above-stated text for the two cultural heritage sites in Myanmar, the surviving monuments, archaeological remains, continuing religious practices and other attributes truthfully and credibly express the potential Outstanding Universal Value of those cultural heritage sites. Among these attributes, there can be identified as material fabric (artistic or historical values) and spiritual tradition/knowledge. It does more intending to the spiritual/religious tradition and knowledge, which will be categorized in Living Heritage, concerned. Continuity in religious/spiritual aspects is more favorable in communities and societies. Nowadays, context in Buddhist cultural tradition/knowledge is more expecting to general public and communities. As for the archaeological sites and historic cities, there will be more aimed to intact and in-situ by scholars and learned societies. Both institutions (since colonial period to recent, government mainly leads and guides to protection measure in heritage sector), heritage partitioners and general public and communities must be played in balance and harmonization. Currently, Department of Archaeology and National Museum is responsible institution for protection measure in authenticity of the attributes in those two World Heritage Sites. To be sustained the in line with regional perspective on cultural heritage site: it should be - economic regeneration in heritage assets; recognizing the essence and value on authenticity in attributes; integrated strongly with respective institutions and communities and peace and stability, too.

In conclusion, as for experience on heritage management in government employee, that abstract or presentation will be focused on the challenging on implementation on maintenance and protection of the authenticity in attributes at cultural heritage sites. These factual experiences will be supported partially to rethinking about Authenticity in a Changing World.

Authenticity perceived differently across natural and cultural frameworks: the mixed landscape challenge at Trang An

Tran Tan Van

Vietnam Institute of Geosciences and Mineral Resources (VIGMR)

The Trang An Landscape Complex was inscribed by UNESCO as a Mixed Cultural and Natural World Heritage Site in 2014 under criteria (v), (vii), and (viii), marking a major milestone for Vietnamese heritage. During the preparation of the nomination dossier, researchers uncovered an exceptional attribute: the continuous human presence in this area for over 30,000 years, if not longer. Throughout this extensive timeframe, the prehistoric inhabitants of Trang An witnessed and adapted to some of Earth's most severe environmental fluctuations and climate changes, particularly global marine transgression and regression cycles. Cultural strata across numerous caves and rock shelters in the area provide remarkably vivid physical evidence of this adaptation: the lower cultural layers reflect an inland terrestrial environment dominated by freshwater stream snails, land snails, and forest mammal bones and teeth; whereas the upper layers feature abundant marine shells, sea snails, marine fish bones and teeth, alongside early pottery as the sea inundated Trang An. Geological and geomorphological investigations have clearly identified two major marine transgression phases: the Flandrian transgression, reaching its peak around 6,000 years ago, leaving sea notches at elevations of 4-6 meters (and up to 8 meters in certain locations); and the Quang Xuong marine ingressions between 2,500 and 1,500 years ago, creating sea notches at 1-2 meters. These sea notches on limestone cliffs, combined with cave sediment sequences and various other indicators, serve as living "stratigraphic benchmarks", testifying to human survival and adaptive capacity in the face of drastic environmental shifts - an invaluable historical lesson for humanity today as we confront the risks of natural disasters and global climate change.

However, under the lens of rigid "material authenticity" perception prevailing at the time, Criterion (v) in Trang An's official Statement of Outstanding Universal Value in 2014 was narrowly constrained to the prehistoric era (from c.30,000 to c.1,200 years BP). This gap was primarily due to the lack of reputable international publications concerning the historical period - the formation of the Hoa Lu Ancient Capital along with Vietnam's first three independent, centralized feudal dynasties in the 10th century and continuing down to the present day - as well as the aforementioned strict perception of "material authenticity" of the heritage.

Drawing upon the spirit of the Nairobi Outcome on Heritage and Authenticity and the Concept Note of the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Heritage and Authenticity, this paper raises the question of embracing a broader, more flexible perspective on heritage authenticity towards

pluralism and inclusiveness. It aims to affirm that the tradition of human adaptation to the environment, natural disasters, and historical upheavals in Trang An by no means ceased in prehistoric times but rather represents a continuum extending also through the feudal era down to the present day. For nations frequently subjected to the impacts of natural disasters, warfare, and environmental fluctuations

like Viet Nam, authenticity may not solely reside in a "frozen material fabric", but is also sustainably preserved through intangible evidence - such as cliff-face epigraphic systems, water procession rituals, forest-opening ceremonies, living heritage values, and diverse indigenous belief systems (Mother Goddess worship, the Four Dharmas, the Four Holy Ladies, Saint Minh Khong, and localized Buddhism). The case study of Trang An and its adjacent karst areas (Van Long-Kim Bang-Tam Chuc, Lac Thuy-An Nghia, Huong Son, among others) can provide essential theoretical and practical foundations, contributing a fresher and more flexible perspective on heritage and authenticity.



04

Archaeology and authenticity in a changing world

Assoc Prof. Tong Trung Tin, Viet Nam

05

Authenticity in maritime trading towns: comparative lessons from Hội An and Japanese port heritage for World Heritage practice

Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Kim, Vice President of The National Council for Heritage, Vietnam; Member of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Minh, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi

Over the past few decades, the perception of “authenticity” in cultural heritage has undergone significant shifts. This paper proposes a reshaping of the conceptualization of heritage “authenticity”, particularly through the lens of port city heritage, focusing on two prominent cases: Hoi An Ancient Town (Vietnam) and the Dejima trading port (Japan).

Unlike static heritage sites, port cities throughout human history—especially international trading ports—have always served as open spaces where trade and cultural acculturation frequently occur. Therefore, the authenticity of this heritage typology cannot be restricted to a single original value or “frozen” at a specific point in the past. Instead, it must be understood as the result of a continuous process of cultural intersection, accumulation, and acculturation over time.

As an early trading port with extensive relations, Hoi An’s authenticity is shaped by a continuous and successive developmental trajectory from the Sa Huynh and Lam Ap - Champa periods, through the era of the Nguyen Lords (Dang Trong), up to the modern era, bearing the profound imprint of intense international cultural acculturation. The local community actively distilled the essence of exogenous cultures (Southeast Asian, Indian, Western Asian, Chinese, Japanese, Western, etc.) to create unique cultural heritages. This fusion has cultivated a “living” heritage ecosystem that encompasses everything from the natural environment to tangible, intangible, and documentary heritages.

Similarly, Japan’s restoration strategy for the Dejima trading port (Nagasaki) reflects a multi-layered conservation paradigm deeply influenced by the 1994 Nara Document. Rather than focusing exclusively on original elements or Dejima’s “golden age” during the



Edo period, Japan has actively reconstructed and simultaneously preserved overlapping cultural layers from various historical eras—serving as a testament to its long-standing history of trade and cultural acculturation.

In conclusion, the authenticity of port city heritage must be recognized as a dynamic whole defined by the intertwining and overlapping of cultural layers, alongside the host community's capacity for cultural acculturation across different periods. This framework represents the most appropriate approach to authenticity, fundamentally aligning with the true nature of this heritage typology in Vietnam and many Asian countries.



DAY 01

THEME 3

Living, Spiritual and Associative Heritage

01

Authenticity within an Indigenous Australian context

Dr Matthew Whincop, Australia

Authenticity is an important consideration in archaeological heritage management, especially with regards to potential World Heritage properties, which must meet an authenticity 'threshold' to be inscribed. Like many aspects of the WH Convention, the original concept of authenticity was grounded in Eurocentric, western scientific dialogue. In 1994, the Nara meeting, and subsequent Nara document on authenticity, expanded the concept. Authenticity could no longer be considered only a pure link to an authentic, unchanged past with a strong focus on a site's fabric. Instead, authenticity is contextual and is continually being negotiated by living cultures that continue to use and interact with a site. This presentation will explore the concept of authenticity within an Indigenous Australian archaeological context, where communities continue to engage, negotiate and reimagine cultural sites. I will explore the paradigm shift in the Australian cultural heritage industry where authenticity was decoupled from a distant past, and instead linked to the ongoing living culture of Australia's Indigenous communities.

02

Form is emptiness, practice is authenticity: Trúc Lâm Buddhism and heritage values at Yên Tử, Vĩnh Nghiêm and Côn Sơn – Kiếp Bạc

Ven. Thích Nu Hanh Tam (Dr. Nguyen Thi Kim Chi), Tran Nhan Tong Institute, Vietnam National University.

Dr. Huong Pham, UNESCO Representative Office in Viet Nam

The inscription of the Yên Tử – Vĩnh Nghiêm – Côn Sơn, Kiếp Bạc Complex of Monuments and Landscapes on the World Heritage List in July 2025 concluded a nomination process spanning thirteen years, in which authenticity was among the central points of discussion. The evaluation acknowledged that many elements were well preserved, yet concluded that authenticity had not been adequately demonstrated because several structures had been recently reconstructed. This initial conclusion reflected an assessment framework grounded largely in material permanence, leaving significant gaps when applied to the living spiritual landscapes characteristic of the Asia-Pacific region.

Drawing on Trúc Lâm Zen philosophy, this paper proposes that the doctrine of form and emptiness (*śūnyatā*), realised through the engaged practice of *cư trần lạc đạo*, offers an important basis for assessing the authenticity of the property. At Yên Tử, the austerity of Ngọa Vân Hermitage and the wider monument system expresses doctrinal content rather than material poverty; the seven-century-old red pine forest embodies ecological and spiritual continuity; and uninterrupted pilgrimage sustains the property as a living tradition.

The paper examines how these arguments were reflected in the adopted Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, and proposes operational recommendations for the Hà Nội Outcome Document concerning functional continuity, doctrinal intent, consistency of application, and community custodianship.



03

Three dimensions of the authenticity of living heritage: the old tea forests of Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er

SHAO Yong
Professor, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University Secretary-General, WHITR-AP, and Director of WHITR-AP Shanghai

This presentation aims to clarify that for historic towns, villages and cultural landscape as living heritage that remains inhabited, authenticity needs to be explored from three perspectives: authenticity as “historical testimony”, authenticity as an “outstanding example of a traditional human settlement”, and authenticity as a “living space of everyday life.” The study argues that in specific conservation and management practices, these three dimensions must be

distinguished and analyzed, balancing “value-based” heritage conservation with a “people-centered” approach. Using the conservation and management of the Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er, a World Heritage site, as a case study, the author focuses on livelihood strategies and economic development strategies based on the protection of human–nature interactions within cultural landscapes, thereby proposing the connotations of authenticity for living heritage. This research is oriented toward real-world cases and responds to the World

Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines, the 2030 United Nations Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs), as well as UNESCO’s 2015 Policy on Sustainable Development.



04

Luang Prabang: authenticity through living heritage, people and their practices

Mr Nyordsavanh Paxe, Lao PDR

The Historic Town of Luang Prabang is recognized for its distinctive combination of traditional Lao architecture, colonial era buildings, religious monuments, cultural landscapes, and its historic urban setting. However, the physical attributes of traditional houses, colonial buildings, and religious structures alone may not fully convey the authenticity and continuing heritage significance of the property. This presentation explores authenticity in the Historic Town of Luang Prabang from the perspective of living cultural heritage, focusing on the people, cultural practices, traditions, beliefs, knowledge, and social relationships that continue to give meaning to its historic places.

The presentation will argue that authenticity should be understood not only through the material fabric and architectural characteristics of heritage buildings, but also through the continuity and transmission of cultural practices associated with them. Religious ceremonies, traditional rituals, handicrafts, food traditions, forms of community interaction, local knowledge, and everyday practices contribute to maintaining the cultural identity and sense of place of Luang Prabang. These living dimensions provide important connections between the tangible attributes of the historic town and the communities who continue to use, interpret, and transmit its heritage.



“Lulik”/Sacred on Living, Spiritual and Associative Heritage of Timor-Leste

Mr Francisco Urbano Dos Santos

Mr Luis Nívio De Fátima Soares, Timor-Leste

This presentation examines the value of Lulik (Sacred) in the Timorese context, arguing that it constitutes the foundational cultural framework through which living, spiritual, and associative heritage are understood and sustained in Timor-Leste. The Timorese people possess rich cultural heritage and have manifested through diverse cultural expressions over generations. The cultural identity of the Timorese people commonly manifests in something called Lulik (Sacred).

Many Timorese people continue to live with traditional practices that have been passed down through generations, mainly traditional ceremonies during harvesting periods, maintaining an Uma-Lulik (sacred house) as the symbolic foundation of family identity, and performing traditional rituals and rituals for healing and ancestral protection.

These practices are not only expressed through oral traditions, rituals, beliefs, language, traditional knowledge, and social relationships, but they are also manifested through physical objects, such as traditional architecture and house construction that have endured across generations. Likewise, caves and rock shelters containing ancient rock art continue to maintain spiritual connections with local communities. Traditional fortresses are also used by communities as places for ancestral invocation and supplication, among many other purposes.

The Lulik (Sacred), which is embodied in certain objects, whether natural or human-made, deserves great respect and veneration among the Timorese people, regardless of its form, location, or physical condition. Therefore, Lulik (Sacred) holds a core value in interpreting the cultural heritage context of Timor-Leste. It serves as a unifying cultural principle linking tangible and intangible heritage, offering an essential framework for understanding and safeguarding Timor-Leste's cultural heritage.

01

Authenticity in Living Cities: Communities, Multiple Values and Interpretation in Wartime Capital Busan and Suwon Hwaseong

Jihon Kim

Chief of Policy, Korean National Commission for UNESCO

Adjunct Professor of World Heritage Studies, Konkuk University

This paper examines how authenticity is understood and sustained in two living urban heritage contexts in the Republic of Korea: Wartime Capital Busan and Suwon Hwaseong. Although the two cases differ substantially in historical character and heritage-making processes, both demonstrate that authenticity in living cities cannot be assessed solely through the survival or reconstruction of material fabric. It is also shaped by the ways in which communities understand, use, interpret and transmit heritage values.

The discussion builds on the Nairobi Outcome on Heritage and Authenticity, which advances a pluralistic understanding of authenticity by recognising multilayered values, community knowledge, use, memory and continuity as integral to heritage significance and management. It also engages with the developing Ha Noi Outcome, particularly its concern with how diverse communities and knowledge holders participate in defining and safeguarding heritage values, how differences and competing claims are addressed, and how community knowledge can be brought into dialogue with credible forms of evidence.

Wartime Capital Busan illustrates how local, national and internationally connected communities may attach different, and at times contested, meanings to the same heritage. This plurality raises questions about whose experiences are represented, how differing interpretations should be assessed, and how significant historical layers can be communicated without reducing the heritage to a single narrative. Suwon Hwaseong offers a complementary perspective, showing how residents can become active knowledge holders and practitioners through interpretation and performance, traditional food practices, and local conservation skills.

Drawing on these cases, the paper proposes practical mechanisms for translating a plural and community-centred understanding of authenticity into heritage practice, including community and knowledge-holder mapping, systematic documentation of participation and differing values, values-evidence-interpretation mapping, inclusive interpretation strategies, and monitoring of knowledge, practice and participation. In doing so, it seeks to connect the conceptual advances of Nairobi with the emerging Asia-Pacific discussion on how authenticity may be assessed and sustained in living heritage contexts.

02

Whose Knowledge Counts as Evidence? Community Custodianship, Living Heritage and the Future of Authenticity in World Heritage Practice

Dr. Atousa Momeni, Iran

Director-General, Tehran Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre under the auspices of UNESCO (Category 2)

Director-General for International Affairs, Deputy of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Islamic Republic of Iran

More than thirty years after the Nara Document, the central question is no longer simply whether authenticity is culturally situated, but how culturally situated knowledge acquires standing within World Heritage decisions. Building on the Nairobi Outcome Document's call for community-centred custodianship, this paper asks whose knowledge is recognised as evidence, by whom, and under what conditions.

The paper advances the concept of epistemic participation: communities should not be engaged only as consultees or bearers of heritage, but also recognised as producers and interpreters of knowledge relevant to authenticity. This does not imply that oral testimony; memory or traditional knowledge should automatically override archaeological or documentary evidence. Nor does it assume that communities speak with a single voice. The challenge is to establish a credible method through which different knowledge systems can be examined together without reducing one to the terms of the other.

A comparative reading of Bam and its Cultural Landscape in Iran, the Kathmandu Valley following the 2015 Gorkha earthquake, and the recovery of Japan's Shuri-jô site after the 2019 fire is used to test this proposition across different experiences of rupture, reconstruction and continuity.

The paper proposes a framework of evidentiary dialogue based on four safeguards: identifiable provenance; contextual corroboration; consent and the protection of restricted or sacred knowledge; and transparent documentation of disagreement, uncertainty and change. It considers how these safeguards could be incorporated into the operational framework for assessing authenticity envisaged by the Dialogue and applied to Tentative Lists, Preliminary Assessments, nomination dossiers, evaluation, management and monitoring. The paper offers epistemic participation as a practical contribution to the Ha Noi Outcome Document and to a more inclusive, rigorous and credible World Heritage system.

03

Community memory, practices and contested values at the Thang Long Citadel

*Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dang Van Bai
Dr. Nguyen Thi Thu Trang*

The safeguarding of world cultural heritage in the 21st century has witnessed a profound shift in thinking from a theory of preservation focused purely on the physical object toward a holistic, organic approach to conservation, in which tangible and intangible heritage are regarded as two inseparable facets of a single living cultural entity. Looking back at the history of international heritage theory, the 1964 Venice Charter once placed its focus on preserving the material authenticity of architecture and archaeology. However, the imposition of these Eurocentric criteria on all forms of heritage revealed their limitations when applied to non-monumental heritage spaces where physical structures, often built of organic materials (wood, brick, earth), have a limited lifespan, yet carry enduring memory through cultural practices, rituals, and traditional craftsmanship.

A major theoretical turning point came with the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994), which expanded the concept of “authenticity” beyond the material fabric of architecture to encompass intangible values as well: form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit and feeling. Following this, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the 2004 Hoi An Protocols further affirmed that intangible cultural heritage is itself the “genius loci” — the spirit infused into physical structures — and that the bearer community holds the authority to determine that authenticity.

For the Thang Long Imperial Citadel Central Sector in Hanoi (inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 2010 under three criteria: II, III, and VI), authenticity does not rest solely in the successive layers of architectural foundations built up beneath the Citadel over 13 continuous centuries, or in the ceramic, porcelain, stone, and wooden artifacts unearthed from the site. The core authenticity of Thang Long – Hanoi is also nurtured, practiced, and transmitted through an unbroken chain of intangible values from the Ly, Tran, Le, and Nguyen dynasties down to community life today — functioning as “living memory” that sustains beliefs, customs, rituals, and sacred spaces. Without this, the Thang Long Imperial Citadel site would become nothing more than a “fossilized museum,” losing the historical continuity that constitutes the very core value underlying the site’s Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

04

Communities, knowledge holders and contested values in Kiribati

Ms Pelea Tehumu, Kiribati

This paper explores the role of communities, knowledge holders, and contested values in the safeguarding of cultural heritage in Kiribati. It explains cultural heritage as more than the preservation of historical places, objects, or traditions. Heritage is also embodied in people, knowledge, language, stories, customary practices, and relationships that shape Kiribati identity and community life. The paper highlights how different groups, including elders, youth, landowners, government agencies, churches, educators, and cultural practitioners, may attach different meanings and priorities to the same heritage resource. These differing perspectives, known as contested values, often arise in relation to development, traditional knowledge, ownership, religion, tourism, climate change adaptation, and heritage documentation.

The study emphasizes that heritage-related disagreements in Kiribati are traditionally addressed through consultation, dialogue, consensus-building, and respect for customary authority. Elders play a vital role as custodians of cultural knowledge, community memory, genealogies, and traditional practices, while youth contribute innovation, technological skills, and new perspectives. Effective heritage safeguarding therefore requires collaboration between generations.

The paper further examines how schools can serve as bridges between elders and youth by integrating local heritage into education, supporting intergenerational learning, and creating opportunities for cultural transmission. Initiatives such as cultural clubs, oral history projects, and an Elders in Residence Program provide practical mechanisms for preserving and sharing cultural knowledge. These approaches strengthen cultural identity, community cohesion, and respect between generations while empowering young people to become future custodians of heritage.

Ultimately, the paper argues that safeguarding cultural heritage in Kiribati is a shared responsibility that depends on active community participation, respect for diverse values, and the meaningful engagement of both elders and youth. By combining traditional knowledge with contemporary skills and educational approaches, Kiribati can ensure the continued transmission and resilience of its cultural heritage for present and future generations.

Sambor Prei Kuk and community engagement: the temple zone of ancient Ishanapura

Mr Seng Chantha, Cambodia

The World Heritage Site of Sambor Prei Kuk (SPK), the archaeological remains of the ancient city of Ishanapura during the late 6th to early 7th centuries, represents a unique cultural landscape where archaeological heritage, natural resources, local traditions, and community livelihoods are closely interconnected. Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2017, the site is not merely a collection of ancient monuments but a living landscape where local communities continue to maintain cultural practices, beliefs, traditional knowledge, and long-standing relationships with the site.

Community engagement underscores the critical role of local knowledge holders in safeguarding the Outstanding Universal Value of SPK through participatory approaches, collaborative decision-making, and the integration of traditional and scientific knowledge. At the same time, different stakeholders may hold differing perspectives on heritage values and appropriate uses of the site. Consequently, tensions may arise between conservation regulations and community needs, particularly concerning access to natural resources, agricultural activities, infrastructure development, tourism, and the protection of monuments and environmental resources. Rather than viewing these differences solely as conflicts, they can be understood as opportunities for dialogue and further collaboration between communities, site managers and heritage professionals.

The experience of SPK demonstrates the importance of participatory heritage management and conservation, in which communities are recognized as partners and knowledge holders rather than simply as beneficiaries. Strengthening heritage education, community consultation, local capacity building, and mechanisms for sharing traditional and scientific knowledge can help reconcile diverse values and perspectives. Such an approach contributes to a more inclusive and sustainable model of World Heritage management and conservation. Ultimately, the long-term protection of monuments and cultural landscapes depends on the knowledge, knowledge and active involvement of communities living in and around the site and maintain a close connection with the heritage and a continuing commitment to its protection.

01

The ICOMOS–ICCROM Guidance for Post-Trauma Reconstruction

Dr Luisa De Marco, ICOMOS Adviser

The paper presents the experience and process ICOMOS undertook, later joined by ICCROM, to prepare the Guidance for Post-Trauma Reconstruction. The presentation will focus on the role of broad reflection on the meanings of ‘recovery’ and reconstruction across different fields, and on a structured analysis of case studies on ‘post-trauma’ recovery and reconstruction in the heritage sector worldwide. It will also present key aspects of the proposed framework for post-trauma recovery and reconstruction and present a few selected cases to show how different outcomes can result from processes that, when distilled, share striking elements and offer key lessons on heritage recovery and reconstruction.

The presentation shall integrate observations and reflections from the case studies presented during Thematic Session 2.

02

Heritage recovery in Myanmar: Bagan and the Mandalay earthquake of March 2025

Dr Kyaw Oo Lwin, Myanmar

Myanmar has faced major challenges in protecting its cultural heritage after natural disasters, especially the 2016 earthquake in Bagan and the March 2025 earthquake, which affected cultural heritage in Mandalay and other areas. These experiences have provided important lessons for heritage recovery, conservation and reconstruction.

This presentation shares Myanmar’s experience in recovering heritage after these earthquakes. It focuses on the importance of documenting damage, assessing surviving historic buildings and materials, and using historical records to guide conservation and reconstruction. It also highlights the value of traditional knowledge, local craftsmanship and modern scientific and technical expertise in the recovery process.

International cooperation has also played an important role. Support from partner countries has contributed to technical assessment, conservation, digital documentation, knowledge sharing and capacity building.

The presentation also considers the meaning of authenticity after a disaster. Heritage recovery is not only about rebuilding damaged buildings. It is also about protecting historical evidence, traditional knowledge, cultural and religious functions, community relationships and cultural practices.

Myanmar’s experience shows that successful recovery requires cooperation among government institutions, heritage professionals, local communities, traditional knowledge holders and international partners. Disaster preparedness, documentation and risk assessment should also be strengthened before disasters occur.

The main message is that heritage recovery should protect both the physical heritage and the cultural life connected to it. Heritage should not only survive; it should continue to live.



03

Reconstruction after the 2015 earthquake: Lal Baithak, Kasthamandap and Rato Matsendranath

Mrs Saubhagya Pradhananga Malla, Nepal

The 2015 Gorkha Earthquake turned heritage conservation in the Kathmandu Valley into something far more complicated than the usual conservation work. It badly damaged physical cultural heritage, but it also interrupted religious practices, community ties, traditional craftsmanship, and the ways knowledge is passed down through generations.

This paper looks again at the idea of authenticity in post-disaster heritage reconstruction. It asks whether authenticity has to mean simply copying the old form and materials, or whether it can be understood more broadly. Drawing on the reconstruction experience in the Kathmandu Valley, the paper puts forward an integrated framework of Authenticity, Value and Integrity that focuses on continuity through careful, responsible renewal.

It examines three quite different cases—Lal Baithak in Bhaktapur, Kasthamandap in Kathmandu, and the Rato Matsendranath Temple in Patan—to see how different reconstruction approaches affected the historic fabric, materials, building techniques, craftsmanship, structural strength, ritual use, and the involvement of local communities. These cases show that seismic strengthening and reconstruction can actually support the ongoing life of heritage when traditional materials, techniques, salvaged elements, skilled craftspeople, and community knowledge are kept and combined with sensible modern engineering.

The central argument is that authenticity is better understood as an ongoing process rather than a fixed state. Post-disaster reconstruction should therefore aim at more than just making monuments look old again. It should work to restore the cultural systems that allow heritage to continue living, adapting, and recovering. For World Heritage practice, the Kathmandu Valley offers a useful model in which reconstruction, recovery, and continuity are closely linked, so that modern knowledge strengthens rather than replaces traditional systems, social relationships, and the knowledge passed between generations.

04

Japanese experience: authenticity, management, dialogue and continuity

Prof. Kazuhiko Nishi, Japan

It is now widely accepted that the authenticity of cultural heritage should be discussed by taking a variety of factors into account. For cultural heritage to remain meaningful to contemporary society and local communities, it is essential that we continually reflect on what that heritage means to us today.

While the idea of minimum intervention continues to be regarded as a valid principle for safeguarding authenticity, the expanding scope of cultural heritage and the growing challenge of sustaining its living role within contemporary society have highlighted a question from a different angle: how should we intervene as stewards of heritage today? Consequently, the nature, purpose, and extent of contemporary intervention have become increasingly important issues in heritage conservation and management.

Therefore, discussions on authenticity are closely linked to the question of how heritage should be managed and how the processes of dialogue and deliberation necessary for that management should be developed and sustained, with the wide variety of experiences from Nara document on Authenticity as well as other relevant texts.



05

Reconstruction, recovery and continuity: the case of Preah Vihear Temple

Mr Phin Samnang, Cambodia

06

When the Wind Blows Again from Chang'an: A Layered Approach to the Conservation, Presentation, and Revitalization of the Mingde Gate Archaeological Site

LIU KECHENG, Xi'an University of Architecture & Technology professor

Mingde Gate was the principal southern gate of the Outer City of Sui Daxing and Tang Chang'an. Today, its archaeological remains lie beneath a densely developed urban area, while its above-ground architecture has disappeared and the site conflicts with modern transport infrastructure. Rather than reconstructing the lost gate or isolating the remains as an archaeological exhibit, the project establishes a three-tiered approach: protective reburial of the remains, evidence-based marking of the historic layout in situ, and an off-site contemporary evocation of the gate's architectural form. This paper examines how the project addresses layered authenticity, the relationship between in-situ evidence and off-site interpretation, contemporary architectural expression, planning realignment, and public engagement. It argues for a differentiated approach in which the authenticity of physical remains is safeguarded, spatial presentation is grounded in archaeological evidence, and creative intervention remains recognizably contemporary and intellectually honest. By combining minimum physical intervention with maximum public interpretation, the project reconnects the archaeological site with the city and its inhabitants. It offers an alternative methodology for activating buried or fragmentary archaeological sites without reconstructing the past.

The Conservation of Mingde Gate Archaeological Site case gives us some thoughts and many various possibilities of heritage protection. We can discuss together.



01

East Rennell: heritage value, tourism and
management challenges

Ms Sophie Tali Liligeto, Solomon Islands



Abstract

Niu Yanan, World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP)

The West Lake case uses Spring Dawn at Su Causeway to examine how cultural meanings relate to causeway and bridge features, planting and landscape relationships. Nomination materials and historical images provide the present documentary basis. Hotel management records introduce a separate question of change at a wider scale. The case tests the relationship between evidence and interpretation; it does not claim completed contemporary fieldwork or consultation with communities.

Proposed session: Case Laboratory 4 — Tangible and intangible attributes, evidence and acceptable change, 29 September, 15:30–16:45.

How can cultural meanings inform judgments of authenticity when a heritage landscape has changed over time? This presentation examines West Lake in Hangzhou as a case for connecting cultural meanings, identifiable attributes and sources of evidence. It responds to the Nairobi Outcome's emphasis on cultural context and the relationships between tangible and intangible aspects of heritage.

The discussion begins with Spring Dawn at Su Causeway. Nomination documentation and historical representations provide an entry point for examining how landscape features and spatial relationships convey cultural meanings. The presentation distinguishes what historical images can support from what requires present-day observation and the knowledge of people who maintain and use the landscape. It then considers official records concerning the visual impacts of the Shangri-La Hotel as a separate example at the wider landscape scale. The distinction between authenticity and visual integrity is maintained throughout.

Drawing on this documentary review, the presentation proposes a concise record linking values, attributes, evidence, interpretations and the effects of change. The record would identify alternative explanations, unresolved questions and conditions for revising judgments. Local knowledge holders and specialists from different cultural backgrounds would participate in testing it. West Lake is offered as a context-specific contribution to comparison, with explicit evidentiary limitations. The proposed method remains to be tested through fieldwork and collaborative review, and does not establish a universal threshold for acceptable change.

Field Trip





The programme includes a field visit to the Trang An Landscape Complex World Heritage Property in Ninh Binh Province.

Participants are advised to:

- Wear comfortable walking shoes;
- Bring sun protection, drinking water, and rain protection as appropriate;
- Follow the instructions of guides and organizers;
- Respect local customs and regulations governing heritage sites.

TIME	SESSION
08:00 – 08:30	Pick up at Legend and Hoang Son Peace Hotel
08:30 – 09:00	Travel from hotel to Trang An Landscape Complex Mixed World Heritage site
9:00 – 9:15	Video screening of Trang An Landscape Complex Mixed World Heritage site
9:15 – 11:30	Technical field visit - Trang An Landscape Complex A technical exercise rather than a guided tour: the authenticity-assessment framework is tested against the property The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value and the attributes that carry it Relationships between natural and cultural values in a mixed property Continuity of function, meaning and use Community and institutional perspectives Management, interpretation, tourism and monitoring challenges
11:30 – 13:00	Lunch
Afternoon	Return to Ha Noi/ Departure to Noi Bai Aiport

Logistics

01

Conference Venue

Melia Hanoi Hotel

- Address: 44B Ly Thuong Kiet Street, Hoan Kiem District, Ha Noi, Viet Nam
- <https://maps.app.goo.gl/x3f1sQFLJkC6hKxYA>
- Telephone: +84 24 3934 3343
- Website: www.melia.com

02

Accommodations near the conference venue

Ha Noi City:

HOTEL NAME	CLASS	WALKING TIME & DISTANCE	DIRECT HOME PAGE / LINK
Meliá hotel	5 star	0m	Meliá Ha Noi
Hoa Binh hotel	4 star	6-8 min (650m)	Hoa Binh hotel
Signature by M Village Thợ Nhuộm	4-star	3-4 min (300 m)	Signature by M Village Booking Page
Affa Boutique Hotel HaNoi	3-star	5-7 min (500 m)	Affa Boutique Hotel Home Page
Hanoi Capital Premium Hotel	3-star	7-9 min (650 m)	Hanoi Capital Hotel Home Page

Further details will be provided prior to the event.

Participants are responsible for any personal expenses incurred during their stay, including minibar consumption, room service, laundry, telephone charges, and other incidentals.

Check-in and Check-out:

The standard check-in time is 14:00 hrs, and the standard check-out time is 12:00 noon. Requests for early check-in or late check-out are subject to hotel availability and may incur additional charges. Participants are responsible for covering all accommodation expenses, including any additional costs arising from early check-in, late check-out, extended stays, or other incidental charges, which should be settled directly with the hotel.



03

Ninh Binh City:

Accommodation for the Ninh Binh programme will be arranged at:

1. Ninh Binh Legend hotel, 177 Le Thai To, Ninh Binh.
<https://ninhbinhlegendhotel.com>
2. Hoang Son Peace hotel, 98 Trinh Tu, Ninh Binh.
<https://hoangsonpeacehotel.com.vn/>

Meals and Hospitality

The organizers will provide:

- Coffee breaks during meeting sessions;
- Lunches during official conference days;
- Official receptions and dinners as specified in the programme.
- Participants are requested to indicate any dietary requirements, food allergies, or special meal requests in advance.
- Any meals not included in the official programme will be at participants' own expense.

04

Transportation During the Event

The organizers will provide transportation for official programme activities, including:

- Transportation from Ha Noi to Ninh Binh on 30 September 2026;
- Transportation for official site visits and field activities.
- Participants are kindly requested to observe announced departure times to avoid delays to the programme.

05

Working Language

The working language of the Dialogue will be:

- English. Interpretation services will be provided for English – Vietnamese only.
- All meeting documents will be made available electronically unless otherwise specified.

06

General Advice

Climate and Dress Code

September and October are slightly warm in northern Viet Nam, with average temperatures ranging from approximately 24°C to 32°C. Participants are advised to bring:

- Business or smart casual attire for conference sessions;
- Comfortable clothing and footwear for field visits;
- A light jacket or shawl for air-conditioned meeting rooms;
- An umbrella or rain protection in the event of occasional showers.

Currency and Banking

The official currency of Viet Nam is the Vietnamese Dong (VND). The payment methods are normally available in international credit cards; Apple Pay, Samsung Pay and Cashless QR code scan. Cash is also commonly accepted. Currency exchange services are available at:

- Noi Bai International Airport;
- Commercial banks;
- Licensed exchange counters;
- Major hotels.

Participants may wish to carry a modest amount of local currency for small purchases and local transportation.

Electricity

Electricity supply in Viet Nam is:

- Voltage: 220V
- Frequency: 50Hz
- Common plug types include Type A, Type C and Type F.

Participants are encouraged to bring their own travel adapters and chargers as required.

Internet and Communications

Wireless internet access will be available at meeting venues and accommodation facilities.

Participants are encouraged to bring personal laptops and mobile devices for use during the Dialogue.

Any international telephone charges or personal communication expenses incurred during the stay shall be borne by participants.

Health and Medical Services

Participants are strongly encouraged to obtain comprehensive medical and travel insurance prior to departure.

Participants should bring any necessary personal medication and relevant medical information.

Emergency Numbers in Viet Nam

- Police: 113
- Fire and Rescue: 114
- Ambulance: 115

Medical Facilities

In case of emergency, participants should contact the event secretariat or hotel reception for assistance.



Contacts

Logistics Focal Point

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Thang Long - Hanoi Heritage Conservation Centre

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UNESCO Representative Office in Viet Nam.

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- **Phone, WhatsApp:** +84 97 387 2235

Hoang Bao Chau,

Viet Nam National Commission for UNESCO

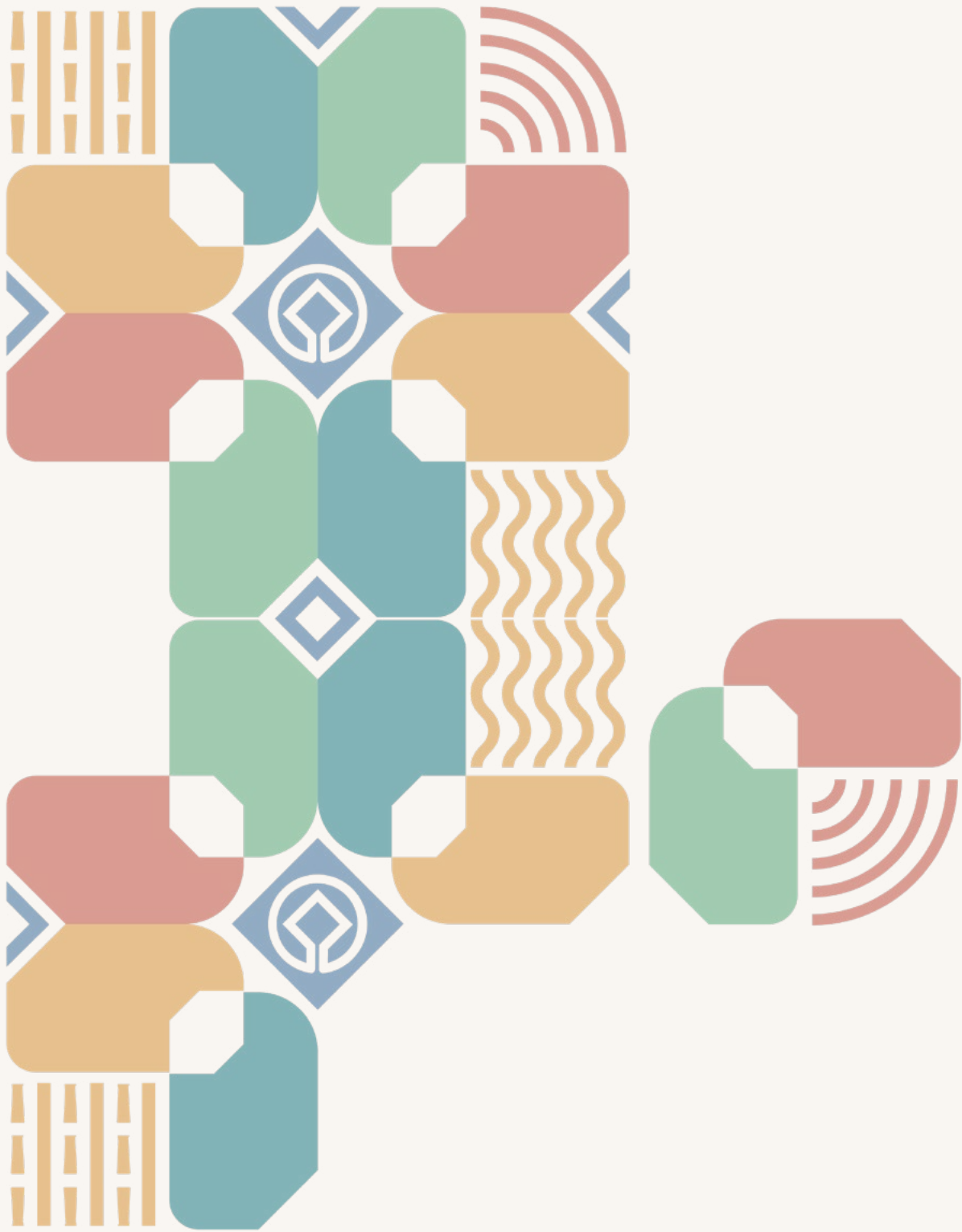
- **Email:** hoangbaochau1506@gmail.com
- **Phone, WhatsApp:** +84 96 274 5204

Emergency Contact During the Event

Ms. Le Hoang Lien,

UNESCO Representative Office in Viet Nam.

- **Email:** lh.lien@unesco.org;
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HA NOI - NINH BINH, VIET NAM
27 September - 1 October, 2026